

CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE DISCOURSES OF
AL-GHAZĀLĪ (D. 1111) AND MAIMONIDES (D. 1204)

NURHANISAH BINTE SENIN

ACADEMY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that Islam and Judaism are both monotheistic religions, they embrace dissimilar concepts of unity. The differences entail the emergence of theological and philosophical discourses among Muslim and Jewish scholars. Arguments on God's unity, incorporeality and His relation to creation thus result in debates on God's existence, attributes and actions. Hence, as part of bridging interfaith dialogue between Islam and Judaism, this study aims to provide a comparative analysis of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, both of whom were considered the principal spokespersons in their respective religions in the 11th and 12th centuries. Historical and textual analyses along with the comparative method are employed to examine their treatises. Al-Ghazālī's discussion on God was elaborated in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of Religious Sciences) and *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* (Moderation in Belief). Maimonides extensively discussed God in *Dalālat al-Hāi'rīn* (The Guide of the Perplexed) and *Mishneh Torah* (The Repetition of Torah). The data from these texts was compared directly without referring to any theoretical stance such as *kalām* or philosophy, since the two scholars had different methods of argumenting. If *kalām* was employed in analyzing both arguments, it will be unjust towards Maimonides. On the other hand, if philosophy was employed, it will be unjust towards al-Ghazālī. This study finds that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides believed that God possesses a necessary existence, but they contrasted in their underlying arguments where al-Ghazālī only affirmed God to be the necessary existent. Maimonides advocated a dualistic approach to necessary existence. They both believed that the universe was created, but Maimonides additionally affirmed that it was created from eternal matter. Both scholars acknowledged God's will and particularization, but al-Ghazālī believed it transcends every occurrence while Maimonides only related it to the arbitrariness of the spheres and supported necessary

causation in explaining contingencies. Al-Ghazālī asserted that God possesses attributes, while Maimonides absolutely refuted subscribing attributes to God's Essence. Finally, al-Ghazālī held that God's will transcend His actions, whereas Maimonides subscribed to both will and providence in perceiving His actions. Apparently, their differences stem from their stances on incorporating philosophical arguments. In sum, it is observed that al-Ghazālī acknowledged God as the Agent of Will, while Maimonides perceived God within the conception of the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible.

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ABSTRAK

Agama Islam dan Yahudi berpegang kepada konsep monoteisme namun keduanya adalah berbeza. Perbezaan ini membawa kepada perbincangan teologi dan falsafah di antara sarjana Islam dan Yahudi. Hujah tentang keesaan Tuhan, tidak berjasadnya Tuhan dan kaitan antara Tuhan dan ciptaanNya membawa kepada perbincangan tentang konsep kewujudan, sifat dan perbuatan Tuhan. Oleh itu, sebagai satu langkah dialog antara Islam dan Yahudi, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyediakan satu analisis perbandingan di antara al-Ghazālī dan Maimonides di mana keduanya merupakan antara sarjana yang terulung pada abad ke 11 dan 12. Selain daripada metode perbandingan, kajian turut mengaplikasikan metode analisis sejarah dan analisis teks dalam meneliti penulisan mereka. Perbincangan al-Ghazālī dinukilkan daripada kitab *Ihyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn* dan *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*. Manakala perbincangan Maimonides pula dinukilkan dari kitabnya *Dalālat al-Hāi'rīn* dan *Mishneh Torah*. Analisis perbandingan daripada kesemua teks ini dilakukan tanpa berlandaskan kepada mana-mana teori seperti teori ilmu *kalām* mahupun falsafah. Ini kerana kedua-dua sarjana mempunyai teori dan metode hujah yang berbeza. Seandainya teori ilmu kalam digunakan dalam menilai persepsi kedua-dua tokoh tersebut, pastilah berlaku ketidakadilan ilmu kepada Maimonides. Manakala jika justifikasi teori falsafah diaplikasikan, bererti ketidakadilan ilmu berlaku kepada al-Ghazālī. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa al-Ghazālī dan Maimonides mempercayai kewujudan Tuhan sebagai *wājib al-wujūd*. Pun begitu, wujud perbezaan pandangan antara mereka di mana al-Ghazālī hanya mempercayai Tuhan sebagai satu-satu pemilik sifat *wājib al-wujūd*. Maimonides telah meletakkan dua kewujudan pada *wājib al-wujūd*. Kedua-dua sarjana ini berpendapat alam ini dicipta. Namun begitu, Maimonides berpendapat alam ini dicipta daripada zat yang qadim. Kedua-dua tokoh ini mengiktiraf kehendak Tuhan dan Tuhan sebagai *murajjih*, namun berbeza

pandangan. Al-Ghazālī percaya bahawa kehendak Tuhan berada pada setiap kejadian manakala Maimonides hanya meletakkan kehendak Tuhan dalam kejadian kosmologi dan meletakkan teori *'illah ma'lūl* dalam menerangkan tentang kejadian baru. Al-Ghazālī menetapkan Tuhan sebagai memiliki sifat. Maimonides pula dengan jelas menolak sifat untuk dihubungkan dengan zat Tuhan. Akhir sekali, al-Ghazālī meletakkan kehendak dalam setiap perbuatan Tuhan. Manakala, Maimonides meletakkan kedua-dua konsep kehendak serta *ināyah* Tuhan dalam memahami perbuatannya. Jelas bahawa perbezaan kedua-dua pendapat adalah berpunca daripada perbezaan kefahaman mereka terhadap pengharmonian antara falsafah dengan agama. Menurut al-Ghazālī Tuhan adalah Tuhan yang berkehendak manakala Maimonides pula meletakkan Tuhan dalam konsep *'Aql*, *'Aqil* dan *Ma'qūl*.

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Nurhanisah binte Senin
No 19, Jalan Widuri, Bukit Beruntung 3,
48300 Rawang, Selangor

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TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Consonants

Arabic letters	Roman letters	Arabic letters	Roman letters
أ, ء	<i>a, ' </i>	ط	<i>ṭ</i>
ب	<i>b</i>	ظ	<i>ẓ</i>
ت	<i>t</i>	ع	<i>'</i>
ث	<i>th</i>	غ	<i>gh</i>
ج	<i>j</i>	ف	<i>f</i>
ح	<i>ḥ</i>	ق	<i>q</i>
خ	<i>kh</i>	ك	<i>k</i>
د	<i>d</i>	ل	<i>l</i>
ذ	<i>dh</i>	م	<i>m</i>
ر	<i>r</i>	ن	<i>n</i>
ز	<i>z</i>	و	<i>w</i>
س	<i>s</i>	هـ	<i>h</i>
ش	<i>sh</i>	ي	<i>y</i>
ص	<i>ṣ</i>	ة	<i>h</i>
ض	<i>ḍ</i>		

Vowels and Diphthongs

اَ	<i>a</i>	ى	<i>ī</i>
أ	<i>u</i>	أو	<i>aw</i>
إ	<i>i</i>	أي	<i>ay</i>
آ	<i>ā</i>	ي	<i>iy</i>
و	<i>ū</i>	ؤ	<i>uww</i>

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The list of short forms or acronyms that are used throughout this research is as follows:

P.B.U.H	Peace Be Upon Him
<i>Ibid.</i>	<i>Ibidem</i> (same reference)
Assoc	Associate
Prof.	Professor
Dr.	Doctor
Ed	Edited
Trans	Translated
N.d	No date
N.a	No author
N.p.p	No place of publish
No.	Number

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter is a preliminary overview of the thesis. A brief introduction to the background of the study and a justification of the selected topic are clarified. In addition, substantial literature related to the study is iterated so as to signify the importance of this thesis in contributing to the body of knowledge. Lastly, the methodology applied throughout the writing of the thesis and the structures of the chapters will be elaborated.

1.1 Background of the the Study

Claims of being monotheistic religions are central to the Abrahamic faiths, especially Islam and Judaism. In Islam, the Qur'an calls upon the people of the book (Christians and Jews) to worship Allah by submitting to Him and believing in Muhammad's prophecy.¹ In Judaism, Yahweh's lordship is only meant for Jews and conversion is not preached to others as Jews do not recognize the worship of God by other religions. This means that monotheism is incapable of uniting the Abrahamic faiths through the concept of God, even though both Islam and Judaism practice strict monotheism. Two main factors evidently separate these two religions: the concept of lordship and the concept of knowing God.² In order to distinguish the concept of God between Islam

¹ See Qur'an 3:64

² The concept of lordship was advocated by al-Farouqi in *Islam and Other Faiths*. He mentioned the different theories of God in Islam and Judaism from the aspect of lordship. Islam perceives God as the Lord of all humanity, whereas Judaism only sees God as the God for the Jewish, excluding the gentiles from experiencing the same God as themselves. As for Islam, the commandments stated in the Qur'an are for all, while the Jews believe the commandments are only for them and gentiles only need to adhere to the Noachide commandments. On the other hand, the concept of knowing God in Islam and Judaism also differs as Jews generally believe that God is a form of personal experience that cannot be judged by

and Judaism, which seems ‘subtle’ according to Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman,³ the notion of knowing God must first be discussed, as it determines the concept of the divine unity of God.⁴

In the Muslim world, the quest for knowing and discussing God’s divine nature gives rise to disputes among philosophers and theologians. The metaphysical discourse mainly focuses on God’s essence, attributes, actions and His relationship with His creation, man and the universe. The studies of metaphysics and cosmology have emerged within the context of Greek philosophy. Various interpretations of God have been presented: Plato’s idea of Good, Aristotle’s prime mover, Plotinus’s trinity and Epicurus’s blessed and immortal God.⁵ Further developments were made in medieval times by Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindī (801-873 AD), al-Fārābī (872-950 AD) and Ibn Sīnā (980-1037 AD) after vigorous movements of translating Greek philosophy into Arabic.⁶ The influence of Greek philosophy on early Muslim philosophy was inevitable as Neo Platonism and Neo Aristotelianism began in the realm of Islamic intellectuals. Consequently, the influence immersed into Islamic and Jewish traditions, which led to the excessive rationalization of religious doctrines and

others. Whereas Islam emerged comprehensively, revealing a standard guideline for worshipping and understanding God. See Ismail Raji al-Faruqi. *Islam dan Kepercayaan Lain* (Terj). (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Berhad, 2008). Therefore it is impossible to identify the most common way of discussing God. Hence, the researcher decided to study Maimonides among Jewish scholars who had deliberated the concept of God extensively.

³ Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman. *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*. (International Islamic University of Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2010), 121

⁴ Departing from the worshipping of one God and believing in the unity of God, Islam and Judaism share a common foundational belief, which is most of the time overlooked amidst the current tensions of the endless Palestine-Israel conflicts. It is relatively true that the discussion of God was never to be the focal point of debate in Judaism. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the basic proclamation of the Jewish is *Shema’ Yisreal Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad* ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone’ (Deutonomy 6: 4). This certainly demonstrates their worship of one God, monotheism.

⁵ See Kenny, Anthony. *A New History of Western Philosophy*. (UK: Oxford University, 2010).

⁶ The translation movement emerged in 832 along with the establishment of the House of Wisdom during the Abbasid caliphate. The assimilation of Greek philosophy with Islam may be seen as impossible if we look at the doctrine, language and cultural factors. However, it is through Christianity that the attachment to Greek philosophy in the fourth century occurred by St Basil in the east and St Augustine in the west, who employed Stoicism and Platonism in their arguments for Christianity and against other faiths. Leaman, Oliver. *Introduction to Medieval Philosophy*. (London: Cambridge University, 1985), 4

the neglect of the revelations. This was observed among the Mu'tazilite and other theological sectarians such as the Shia and its sects, who held reason above revelation in understanding the concept of God. The discussion on the metaphysical subject was later known as *kalam*.⁷ *Mutakallimin* such as Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī applied some philosophical argumentation in establishing systematic proofs and propositions. Philosophy basically established premises that the *mutakallimin* subsequently applied to religious texts⁸ either for interpretation or defense purposes.

Meanwhile, in the Jewish sphere, theological-philosophical thought emerged due to the assimilation of Muslims and Christians in the east and west. This coexistence consequently sustained them in explaining their religions rationally vis-à-vis the others. Besides, the pressure of converting to Islam or Christianity may also somewhat mark their vulnerability. The Jewish *Kalām* primarily began to surface in the ninth century along with the influence of Muslim and Christian theology.⁹ The influence was apparent with the Karaite Jews¹⁰ who were swayed by the Mu'tazilite's rational arguments. As a result, Islamic and Jewish traditions were both confronted with the rational Mu'tazilite and Karaite thought. The claim of knowing the Truth solely with reason and by relying less on religious traditions was unacceptable to the

⁷ Branch of knowledge in Islam that is usually translated as 'speculative theology.' *Kalam* literally means speech, talk or words. It has a negative connotation among early scholars, such as Imam Abū Hanīfah, Imam Mālik and Imam Syāfi'i, as it leads to disunity and debates on God. The term is only widely accepted in the later period of the ninth century when the creedal belief of Islam was contested due to the illumination of philosophical premises within the discussion of predestination and others. As Ibn Khaldūn mentioned, *Kalam* is merely intended to refute heretics. Ibn Khaldūn. *Al-Muqaddimah*. Trans F. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 155. See also Hasan Mahmūd Syāfiī. *Al-Madkhal ila Dirasah 'Ilm al-Kalam*. (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah. 1991), 26. See also M. Abdel Haleem. 'Early kalam' In *History of Islamic Philosophy*. Ed Syed Hossein Nasr & Leaman, Oliver. (London: New York, 1996), 71

⁸ Leaman, Oliver. *Introduction to Medieval Philosophy*. (London: Cambridge University, 1985), 8

⁹ Direct contact between Jewish scholars such as Muqammas with Christian theologians was obvious in the 9th century, when Muqammas, who studied under the guidance of his Christian teacher in Nisbis for many years may have very much been influenced by Christian theology. Simultaneously, Muqammas' Islamic influence can be seen through his exposure to Aristotelian philosophical material, which was mainly written in Arabic. Sarah Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2009), 34. See also Cook, M, "The Origins of Kalam" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 43, 1980, 32-43

¹⁰ A Jewish sect who denies the genuinity of Oral Torah as the sayings and discussions of the Rabbinate (religious scholars of the Jews)

Ash‘arite and Rabbinic societies who held that revelation is superior to rational thought. Although the Mu‘tazilite and Karaite applied philosophical tools in developing their distinctive doctrines, they were still mainly considered theologians. The Mu‘tazilite specifically labelled themselves as ‘members of justice and unity’ (*Ahl al-‘Adl wa al-Tawhīd*), indicating their two main doctrines: justice and the unity of God. According to the Mu‘tazilite, being just refers to God’s incompetence to do evil and giving human beings free will, while the concept of unity entails denying that God would have attributes.¹¹ Conversely, the Ash‘arite rebutted the denial of attributes and strongly affirmed that God has attributes. Instead, al-Ghazālī maintained that God’s attributes do not mean His plurality but rather God’s attributes separate His actions from His divine essence.

Likewise, the Mu‘tazilite had a vast impact on the Karaite Jews as well. The Karaite questioned the authority of the rabbinic chain of tradition and rejected the oral Torah as part of the Jewish sacred texts. Externally, the Rabbinic Jews¹² also faced attacks from Muslims and Christians for their custom of only accepting Moses’ Law as the word of a true prophet of God.¹³ Owing to such internal and external counterparts, the urge for a comprehensive component to harmonize reason with religion was in high demand, which then led to employing a philosophical stance in rationalizing the Scriptures.

Alternatively, Maimonides, also known as Rambam (acronym for Rabbi Moses ben Maimon) embraced philosophy, for he believed that philosophy is readily imbued within the Scriptures. For Maimonides, philosophy was not something alien to

¹¹ Al-Syāfie, Hasan Mahmūd. *Al-Madkhal ila Dirāsah ‘Ilm al-Kalam*. (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah. 1991), 98

¹² The term ‘rabbinate’ refers to religious scholars or jurists in the Jewish community. It has been employed since the times of the prophets to address rabbis. It also connotes a similar meaning to *aḥbar*. Al-Musīrī, Abd Wahab. *Mausu‘ah al-Yahūd wa al-Yahudiyyah wa al-Sahyuniyyah*. J 2. (Dar al-Syuruq) 61.

¹³ Sammuelson, Norbert. *Jewish Philosophy: An Historical Introduction*. (New York: Continuum. 2003), 164

religion, as the Scripture itself was revealed in a rational way and man must explore it further.

Another emerging *Kalam* factor was due to the prerequisite of a systematic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an's ambiguous verses that may lead to understanding anthropomorphism¹⁴ and subscribing imperfect virtues to God. In Judaism, the rabbinic scholars were inclined to accept the verses as they are without allegorical interpretation. As for Islam, anthropomorphic verses, in Arabic generally known as *mutasyabihāt*, had been discussed extensively among Mujassimah and Musyabbihah who interpreted the *mutasyabihat* literally and without purifying God's essence.

It can generally be observed that philosophical views were advocated by Jewish philosophers via contact between Jews and other cultures.¹⁵ Although rabbinic and Biblical literature supplies the core argumentative concepts, the emergence of philosophical thought nonetheless demonstrates a lack of continuity between Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism. This is apparent owing to the influence of Jewish philosophers who were excessively fascinated by Arabic translations of Greek philosophy by Muslims.¹⁶

The differences are evident in certain theories. For instance, texts that ascribe bodily figures and emotions to God are rejected by philosophers who maintain that God cannot possess a body or emotions. Then the universe is described in the texts as having been created *ex nihilo*. However, the philosophers denied the former theory and

¹⁴ The attribution of human qualities to the divine thus conceives God or the Gods in human form. Reese, William. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), 18

¹⁵ As early as the tenth century till late twelfth century, Jewish society was in contact with the Islamic civilization in Spain. Later, from the late twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, Jews were in contact with the Christians in Spain and Italy. David Shatz. 'The biblical and rabbinic background to medieval Jewish philosophy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*. eds Frank, Daniel & Leaman, Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2003, 19

¹⁶ Sirat, Colette. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5

advocated an eternal existence of the universe. Besides, the subjects of prophecy and bodily resurrection were also addressed by the philosophers. In fact, similar discussions took place in the Islamic world during that period.¹⁷ Nevertheless, despite not being parallel to Biblical and rabbinic traditions, Jewish philosophy remained blatant.

Arguments on the oneness of God and the cosmic system resulted in a number of important and interesting questions. The absolute and simple being of God as advocated by the philosophers seemed to be in conflict with the Qur'anic image of God as the Omniscient and Omnipotent. The knowledge God possesses while ignoring the minute details that happen below Him result in God's deficiency. Meanwhile, the emanation structure proposed by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā and that was also apparently adopted by Maimonides, consequently hampers God's omnipotence.¹⁸

In this context, the fear that philosophy might damage Qur'anic teachings and creedal beliefs led al-Ghazālī to confront the philosophers by proposing an absolute concept of theism in achieving knowledge of God. Al-Ghazālī argued that philosophy is not capable of demonstrating the truth. Philosophical tools are not sufficient to penetrate the innermost secret of God, who remains unknown to human understanding -- not because of the insincerity of philosophy, for it too acknowledges the oneness of God, His power and supremacy.¹⁹ Hence, al-Ghazālī challenged the philosophers' arguments and confronted philosophy with philosophical tools to reveal their incoherence.

The *'ilm al-kalām* was indeed essential to both Islam and Judaism in rebutting deviated opinions and counterparts. Al-Ghazālī was a 12th century Muslim scholar and successor of the Ash'arite theology. He plausibly discussed the science of

¹⁷ Shatz, David. *The Biblical and Rabbinic Background to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. 18

¹⁸ Campanini, Massimo. *An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 126

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 126

metaphysics in a theological fashion, contesting the philosophers and deviant sectarians such as the Batinite and Mu'tazilite. This is apparent in his popular treatises *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* and *Fadai 'h al-Bāṭiniyyah*.

On the other hand, Maimonides adopted Aristotle's arguments in attesting philosophical proofs, which he believed were readily imbued within the Scriptures. Maimonides sensed the urgency to embrace this truth and have it transcribed.²⁰ He further considered that the principle of God's unity and incorporeality must be the truth and demonstrative instead of merely assumptions made by the theologians. Since human knowledge depends upon the multiplicity of sensible data, it is important that the intellect be coupled with the divine law.²¹ Maimonides believed man can only attain truth through the perfection of the human intellect, which is the nearest man can come to an imitation of God. This clearly demonstrates Maimonides' view was parallel with Aristotle's.

Nevertheless, from previous research Strauss identified there may be a 'possible acquaintance' between Maimonides and al-Ghazālī's writings on the concept of God's free will.²² In his *Tahafut*, al-Ghazālī strongly argued against the philosophers' notion of an eternal world with his proposition of an eternal will of God. Maimonides did not reject it, and in fact this is the only one of twelve *kalam* propositions refuted with which he agreed.²³ Moreover, despite his attachment to Aristotelian philosophy at least as far as the sublunar realm is concerned, Maimonides appeared to reject Aristotle's regress causation in relation to God and in contrast

²⁰ Maimonides provided an example of seeing the need to write philosophical truth of the Scriptures similar to the writings of Mishnah (Biblical exegesis) when the issue of vulnerability rises regarding oral tradition. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. M. Friedlander (trans). (New York: Dover Publication, 1965), 108

²¹ Campanini, Massimo. *An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, 126

²² Strauss phrased the acquaintance as 'considerable interest.' Pines, Shlomo. 'The Translator's Introduction.' *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Pg cxxvii.

²³ There are 12 propositions of *Kalam* being refuted by Maimonides in his *Guide*.

accepted al-Ghazālī's concept of particularization.²⁴ In another account, Herbert Davidson discussed al-Ghazālī's concept of particularization juxtaposed to that of Maimonides.²⁵ It is generally observed that Maimonides seems to have agreed with al-Ghazālī's idea that God is an agent who possesses will and particularization. Nevertheless, if Maimonides were to argue that God is the particularizer and possesses an eternal will, how can that be incorporated with his negation of attributes?

It is somewhat intriguing to study how al-Ghazālī and Maimonides argued and affirmed divine unity. Although they did not live in the same era or location, what binds them is their sources of knowledge and relative discourses. The uprising of Arab intellectuals starting from the tenth century bore fruits in later centuries, which were embraced not only by Muslims but equally by Christians and Jews. The assimilation that took place, especially during the Umayyad rule in the east and west, brought scholars together in reading Arabic materials that had been vastly translated by Arab Muslim scholars.

In both Islam and Judaism, God is said to be unique and possess divine unity. Nevertheless, to what extent can God be described and known? If God is unique, at one point God is known in both Scriptures as completely different from man. But at other junctions, God describes Himself lavishly, as if in anthropomorphic forms. In interpreting God's unity, the extreme perspective will either claim that God possesses created attributes or that God must be divested and stripped of all attributes. Besides,

²⁴ This has partially demonstrated his opinion on the limitation of the metaphysical discourse. As he mentioned in Guide II 25, human reason is not capable of understanding God's mysterious work within the context of the eternity of creation.

²⁵ Davidson, Herbert. *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 197. He iterated that the particularization argument drawn by Maimonides, despite originating from the *Kalām* proposition as established by Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī, was distinctively formulated in an Aristotelian framework. Maimonides argued on the possession of intellect imbued within the spheres, which at the same time respond and act according to the Agent's will. Thus, the notion of intellect and emanation certainly does echo the Aristotelian framework.

how can one relate God's actions to man, since He is the divine master who lives in a different world than His creations?

Hence, the main concerns of Muslim and Jewish theologians and philosophers are in comprehending the Divine and finding God's relation to His creations. It consequently demands proving God's unity and incorporeality. This can only be understood through examining His existence, attributes and actions. This idea probably stems from Islamic and Jewish traditions, because both maintain a strict monotheistic belief. Still, Christianity holds a somewhat different view of monotheism with its concept of the trinity.

The first general issue that arises in this study is the conception of God in Islam and Judaism, which will be specified by exploring spokespersons from each religion. This leads to another matter being rectified regarding the correspondence between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. They did not chance upon each other nor lived in the same period and area. Nevertheless, their writings correspond in some ways. Al-Ghazālī attempted to establish the notion of God who possesses power and will to create something out of nothing, whereby His power and will intermediate every creation and event, and He is not obliged to any necessary actions. On the other hand, Maimonides attempted to establish a simple divine unity who possesses free will and emanates through His being and the Active Intellect, which indirectly necessitate some of God's actions. In terms of their differences, or contradictions that are apparent in their sources, al-Ghazālī refuted philosophy and adopted theological argument while Maimonides rebutted theology and declared himself an Aristotelian. Thereby, a number of converging points appear in their discourses. In exploring the above-mentioned matters, this study addresses three important metaphysics topics in exploring the concept of God from al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' perspectives, namely the existence and anthropomorphism, attributes and names, and acts of God.

1.2 Questions of the Study

- 1.2.1 How did al-Ghazālī discuss the concept of God in terms of His existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names and actions?
- 1.2.2 How did Maimonides discuss the concept of God regarding His existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names and actions?
- 1.2.3 To what extent are the discourses of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides similar and different on the concept of God?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- 1.3.1 To examine the concept of God according to al-Ghazālī in the discussion of God's existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names and His actions
- 1.3.2 To examine the concept of God according to Maimonides in the discussion of God's existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names and His actions
- 1.3.3 To comparatively analyse the similarities and differences between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on the concept of God

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study signifies an interdisciplinary comparative research on the theological and philosophical discourses of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides pertaining to the concept of God. The elaboration is deliberated from three aspects, namely God's existence,

attributes and actions. Since the concept of God is rarely discussed in Judaism,²⁶ it is hoped this study will shed light on the understanding of divine unity through the lens of a Jewish philosopher, Maimonides. Apart from that, the fact that Islam and Judaism both share a strict monotheistic belief further signifies the importance of this study. Hence, the lack of an interfaith dialogue between the two religions necessitates a study of the concept of God.

This study may contribute to the interfaith dialogue between Islam and Judaism. According to Michael Wyschogrod²⁷ in the *Dialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths*, the similarity in monotheistic faiths is certainly an advantage in bridging dialogue between Islam and Judaism. However, it is impossible to teach Muslims the Hebrew Bible, as Muslims believe it has been distorted and reaching an agreement is difficult. In contrast, the Christian-Jewish relationship is more feasible through discussing the Hebrew Bible, as they share the same text but are irreconcilable on the concept of God with regards to Christians believing in the trinity. This proves that comparative theology on divine unity is consequently essential to the interfaith

²⁶ Having to accept the fact that Jews inconsistently revolve according to the civilizations that pass them, it is scarcely possible to grasp a precise concept of God throughout their existence. Judaism in its formative period, that is, in the patriarchal and prophetic times, differed from exilic and post-exilic Judaism; and rabbinic or pharisaic Judaism again presented a phase quite different from Mosaic Judaism, to which the Sadducees, and afterward to some extent the Karaites, persistently adhered. Similarly, Judaism in the Diaspora or Hellenistic Judaism, showed great divergence from that of Palestine. So, too, the mysticism of the Orient produced in Germany and France a different form of Judaism from that which was inculcated by Arabic philosophy and cultivated by the Jews of Spain. Again, many Jews of modern times more or less systematically discarded that form of Judaism fixed by the codes and casuistry of the Middle Ages, and were inclined toward a Judaism that they held more in harmony with the requirements of an age of a broader culture and larger aims. The theological framework of Judaism was never an agreed dogmatic discussion. In Judaism, it is believed that divergence of opinions exists even on the concept of God. Despite the divergence, Jews still hold tightly to the monotheistic form of God and believe in the God of Moses mentioned in the Bible who helped them out of exile. Therefore, in reiterating monotheism, the theological discussion was only extensively debated in the Middle Ages during the golden age of Islam and the science of *Kalām*. Meanwhile, the Judaic faith has never been central in the religion, as Judaism is more inclined towards the Law of Moses and law of governing the people, and never to the central discussion of God. God is only seen as the Governor and Protector of the Israelites without having to conform His Godliness. Moreover, it can be proven through the inexistence of a solid fundamental of creedal belief until Maimonides emerged and developed the tenets as to behold the faith affirmatively. This is without doubt the effect of Islam on Judaism during the assimilation of Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates.

²⁷ Wyschogrod, Michael. *Dialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths*. (USA: International Studies Group of Academy of Religion, 1982), 16

dialogue amidst the prolonged and intense relationship between Islam and Judaism due to the Palestine-Israel crisis.

Previous studies on al-Ghazālī and Maimonides have basically addressed the concepts of existence, repentance, spiritual pleasure and the books of knowledge, while some studies have explored possible similarities between the two scholars.²⁸ Nevertheless, a complete comparison between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides regarding Divinity is yet to be done. Thus, the discussion in this study will focus on God's existence, attributes and actions, on which both scholars have elaborated extensively. It is generally known that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides both discussed God comprehensively. Nevertheless, there is no such research to date, perhaps due to their differences in the epistemological stance. Therefore, the discussion necessitates a research to be done especially on the concept of God due to the background of the discourse today with issues ranging from extremism to pluralism that emerge from conflicts between religions. Their compatibilities and differences are worth exploring, given not only that they lived in a similar milieu, which is the Arab scholastic era, but they also upheld monotheistic religious beliefs.

In short, this study is intended to contribute to the corpus of interfaith dialogues between Islam and Judaism in terms of comprehending the concept of God in both religions through an unbiased and ethical comparison. Understanding the unity of God according to both Scriptures is indeed an essential aspect for both beliefs.²⁹

²⁸ Eran, Amira. "Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides on the World to Come and Spiritual Pleasures," in: *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 8 (2001), 137–166. See also M. S. Stern. 1979. Al-Ghazālī, Maimonides and Ibn Paquda on repentance: A comparative model. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. (4) 47. Strauss phrased the possible similarities as 'considerable interest.' Shlomo Pines. 'The Translator's Introduction.' *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Pg cxxvii. The acquaintance between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides is deliberated further in the justification of scholars under subtopic 1.6.

²⁹ Although the concept of God is not the core of Jewish belief, it is important to note that the teaching of *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) on the unity of God is indeed an important component that each adherent of Islam and Judaism should believe in.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is comparative in nature. More specifically, views, premises and propositions brought forward by both scholars are compared and considered. It is also a comparative study of Islam and Judaism on the concept of God. Focus is on the theological and philosophical discourses of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides in their discussions of the Divine. This research examines both scholars' texts to deduce their metaphysical thought. Regarding al-Ghazālī, this study mainly highlights his book *Ihyā' 'Ulum al-Din*³⁰ (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) and subsequently *al-Iqtisad fī al-I'tiqād*³¹ (Moderation in Belief). *Tahafut al-Falasifah*³² (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) will be referred to as well for a more in-depth discussion.

With respect to Maimonides, his treatise *Dalalat al-Hai'rin*³³ (The Guide of the Perplexed) and his *Mishneh Torah*³⁴ (Repetition of the Torah), which was written in Hebrew, will be thoroughly explored to understand his conception of God. As both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides lived in the 11th and 12th centuries consecutively, the discussion in this study is based on the background of the Muslim and Jewish middle-age period, which is also known as the Muslim golden era. Therefore, the study essentially highlights Muslim theologians and philosophers to whom the majority of

³⁰ Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid bin Muhammad. *Ihyā' 'Ulum al-Din*. Vol. 1. (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah, 2008a).

³¹ Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid bin Muhammad. *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*. (Jeddah: Dar al-Minhaj, 2008b). This study also refers to the English translated version by Aladdin M. Yaqub. *Al-Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013)

³² Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid bin Muhammad. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. (Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008). This study also refers to the English version by Sabih Ahmad Kamali. *Al-Ghazālī's Tahafut al-Falasifah*. (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963)

³³ Musa bin Maimun. *Dalālat al-Hāi'rin*. (Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2007). Another version of *Dalalat al-Hairin* in Arabic is Musa bin Maimun al-Qurtubi al-Andalusi. *Dalālat al-Hāi'rin*. Huseyin Atay (ed). (n.p.p): Maktabah al-Thaqafah al-Diniyyah, (n.d)). As for the English translation this study mainly refers to this version of translation, Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. M. Friedlander (trans). New York: Dover Publication, 1965. There is also another translation, Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. S. Pines (trans). Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963

³⁴ *Mishneh* is an exegesis of the Torah, which explains the law and jurisdiction of the Torah. This study utilizes the online version of *Mishneh Torah*, which can be found in the following link http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332555/jewish/Maimonides-13-Principles-of-Faith.htm. 12 April 2013

Jewish and Christian scholars have been very much indebted. They include Maimonides, most of whose writings and commentaries were deeply influenced by Muslim philosophers, such as al-Fārābī (872-950 AD), Ibn Sīnā (980-1037 AD) and Ibn Bajjah (1095-1138 AD). Although al-Ghazālī was not mentioned in his texts, it is quite obvious that Maimonides read al-Ghazālī's writings in order to more deeply comprehend not only the Ash'arite theological arguments but also philosophical writings in general.³⁵ In brief, this study comprises comparative theology and philosophy, including historical and textual analyses of the two scholars.

In discussing the concept of God, this study is aimed to prove God's existence, unity and incorporeality. Therefore, three aspects of God were selected to demonstrate His existence, unity and incorporeality: first, God's existence and anthropomorphism in verses in both Scriptures; second, God's attributes and names; and third, the actions of God. These three aspects intertwine to demonstrate God's existence, unity and incorporeality. The three topics were chosen in accordance with both scholars' discussions on their respective treatises. Maimonides' discussion appears similar to al-Ghazālī in the segregation of topics into essence and existence, attributes and actions. This clearly demonstrates the Islamic milieu influence on Maimonides' writings and is coherent with the opinion that no great scholar could escape from referring to Muslim writings during this period.³⁶

An analysis is then carried out according to theological and philosophical arguments and a result is deduced from a comparison of both arguments. From the comparison, convergences and divergences will become apparent. Subsequently, a deeper analysis of al-Ghazālī's influence on Maimonides will be made. Al-Ghazālī's argument against Maimonides' line of argument prior to Maimonides' attempt to

³⁵ Pines. *The Philosophic Sources of The Guide of the Perplexed*. cxxvii

³⁶ Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 25

synthesize philosophical argument within his proposition is conferred. It is evident that although al-Ghazālī preceded Maimonides, his treatises were actually written in a very comprehensive manner and do not only concern religion but also logic. It is possible Maimonides may have read those books as well.³⁷ Apart from that, comparisons between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides with Muslim philosophers are also apparent such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā as well as the Greek philosophers namely Aristotle and Plato will be conferred. This is especially relevant to deduce their line of arguments which are either converged or diverged from the respective philosophers' arguments.

In sum, the purpose of this study is to present a comparative theological and philosophical examination of God's divinity from His existence to His attributes and actions from al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' perspectives, with both points of compatibility and disagreement.

1.6 Justification of Choosing the Scholars

Despite the different religious beliefs, affiliations, times and locations, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides indeed corresponded indirectly to each other through their discourses on God. There is apparent affinity between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, which is observed to be the result of a background similar to the medieval Arabic milieu. The possibility of an indirect influence or borrowing among traditions in understanding the concept of God is also demonstrated.

First, it is clear that both discourses are similar in the structure of discussion. Both scholars referred to the main elements of God that constitute His essence,

³⁷ This will be discussed further in chapter 2.1.2. See Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 69. See also Fletcher, M. "Ibn Tūmārt's teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī", *Al-Qanṭara* 18, 1997, 305-330.

existence, attributes and acts. Besides, both discussed the concept of anthropomorphism in the Qur'an and the Hebrew Bible, which was then interpreted allegorically. This kind of arrangement was common among theologians and philosophers in debating God. It demonstrates that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides embraced the tradition of discourse.

Other junctions indicate that the structure and technique of writing Maimonides employed seem similar to al-Ghazālī. For instance, in his *Ihyā'* al-Ghazālī posited 'the Book of Knowledge' as the first chapter of the book. Similarly, there is also a chapter on the Book of Knowledge in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* but the content slightly differs. Al-Ghazālī's Book of Knowledge contains a usual epistemological discussion, whereas Maimonides emphasized on what one must know and believe.³⁸ Second, Maimonides' book title *Dalalat al-Hai'rin* (The Guide of the Perplexed) is also found in al-Ghazālī's *Ihya'* referring to God as the 'guide of the perplexed' (*dalil al-mutaḥayyirin*).³⁹ The phrase '*dalil al-mutaḥayyirin*' is mentioned twice in *Ihya'*. It is mentioned once in the *Book of Excellent Characteristics* of the Prophets and again in the explanation on the true meaning of blessings under the *Book of Patience and Gratefulness*. In both junctions, al-Ghazālī refers to God as a guide for the perplexed. Third, it is also very obvious when in his book *Epistle to Yemen*, Maimonides describes the Torah as that "which guides us, and which delivers us from error" (*al-Munqidh lanā min al-Dalal*). This phrase is found in al-Ghazālī's renowned autobiography *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, which elaborates his spiritual journey.⁴⁰ These three proofs demonstrate Maimonides' acquaintance with al-Ghazālī's writings.

He may not have mentioned al-Ghazālī in any of his works, but to claim that he did not

³⁸ Harvey, S, "Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides and their Books of Knowledge" J.M. Harris (ed.), *Be'erot Yitzhak – Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, 2005, 99–117. The phrase *dalīl al-mutaḥayyirīn* is mentioned twice in *Ihyā'*

³⁹ See Gil'adi, A. "A Short Note on the Possible Origin of the Title *Moreh Ha-Nevukhim*" *Tarbiz*, 49, 1979, 346-347. See also Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 25

⁴⁰ Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 69.

acknowledge or was not familiar with al-Ghazālī is implausible. This is likewise applicable to other Muslim or Jewish theologians, be it the Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite, Jewish Rabbinite or Karaite, whose lines of arguments Maimonides rebutted in depth but did not mention directly in his writings.

Secondly, it can be claimed that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides were known as spokesmen for their respective religions in discussing the notion of God's unity and incorporeality. Al-Ghazālī attempted to establish Tawhid in such a comprehensive theistic notion that it is extended in most of his works, such as *Iḥya'*, *Iqtisad*, *Tahafut* and others. Although earlier scholars like his predecessors al-Ash'arī (873-935), al-Baqillani (950-1013), al-Juwaynī (1028-1085) and others had delineated the *kalām* account, al-Ghazālī nonetheless continued to strengthen and deliberate the majority of proofs once claimed by al-Ash'arī and his successors.⁴¹

Maimonides may perhaps be considered the earliest philosopher of Jewish thought. He proclaimed that none of the rationalists preceding him could be called philosophers as there are no Jewish philosophers mentioned in his *Guide*.⁴² He established the concept of the unity of God based on Aristotelian arguments and refuted the theological arguments that he termed mere imagination. Maimonides' greatest contribution was in listing the 13 articles of faith⁴³ that have been widely

⁴¹ Mudasir Rosder. *Asas Tauhid: Pertumbuhan dan Huraiannya*. (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. 1989), 41

⁴² Only two Jewish philosophers namely Isaac Israeli (d. 950) and Joseph Ibn Nadiq (d. 1148) are mentioned (probably because Ibn Tibbon had only asked about these two) which Maimonides only acknowledged as pure physician. Sarah Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 27

⁴³ 1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in God's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in God's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship God exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy.
7. The belief in the primacy of the prophecy of Moses, our teacher.
8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah.
9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.

accepted by Jewish adherents and five of which emphasize that God was revealed in the commandments. This occurs when dogma and creedal doctrine are not used to being central to Judaic belief. Consequently, it becomes customary of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles in a slightly more poetic form beginning with the words *Ani Maamin* --"I believe"-- every day after the morning prayers in the synagogue.⁴⁴

It is evident that although al-Ghazālī's affiliation with Judah Halevi was closer than Maimonides, Judah Halevi (1075-1141) employed al-Ghazālī's arguments to rebut Aristotelian philosophy in Spain. Besides Judah Halevi, Hasdai Crescas (1340-1411) was among those influenced by al-Ghazālī's writings, as he employed al-Ghazālī's work to critique the Aristotelian philosophy.⁴⁵ Both Halevi and Crescas generally applied al-Ghazālī's profound argument to expose the danger of philosophy in religious thought. Nevertheless, Maimonides' influence and scholarship among Jewish scholars is more credible, since he was the one who established the 13 principles of faith that present-day Jews still hold and recite during daily prayers.

Third, al-Ghazālī's effect on Maimonides is plausible owing to the Almohad prism of theological implications.⁴⁶ Again, the structure of Maimonides' treatise was founded on the epistemological concept of knowledge highlighting the close relation of true knowledge with belief. Maimonides explained that belief does not merely entail utterances as Jews normally understand. Belief must be represented outwards in seeking certain knowledge regarding faith. This is similar to what al-Ghazālī implied

10. The belief in God's omniscience and providence.

11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.

12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.

13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

⁴⁴ Online *Mishneh Torah* see http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332555/jewish/Maimonides-13-Principles-of-Faith.htm.
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⁴⁵ Wolfson, Harry. 1929. *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*. (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press), 11-16

⁴⁶ Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 68-70

when he mentioned the necessity to learn *Fard 'Ain*, which would lead to attaining knowledge of God. Thus, the influence of al-Ghazālī on Maimonides' work is obvious despite not having mentioned al-Ghazālī's name directly in his treatises. Moreover, anthropomorphism, which is incompatible with monotheism, was seen as an impact of the Almohad indoctrination. Although Maimonides was not the first Jewish philosopher to reject anthropomorphism, none had actually clearly defined this as an article of faith. This may have been possibly due to al-Ghazālī's influence on the Almohad theological realm. Al-Ghazālī's thought basically founded the Almohad reign. It was spread by Ibn Tumart, who was once known as al-Ghazālī's disciple. Writings by al-Ghazālī are easily traceable to the Almohad rule period.⁴⁷ Thus, Maimonides could not have missed reading al-Ghazālī's works, especially his reiteration and refutation of Greek philosophy.

Fourth, although al-Ghazālī's influence on Maimonides' writings may not have been substantial, despite the contrasting ideas of the two scholars some of al-Ghazālī's views appear similar to Maimonides' argument in his writings. This demonstrates al-Ghazālī's significant effect. It is thus the aim of this research to explore al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses in terms of compatibility and disagreements.

Among the apparent similarities between both scholars, Leo Strauss mentioned their opinion on the created world. Maimonides seemed to have agreed with al-Ghazālī on the subject of God's will and particularization.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Maimonides still subscribed to Aristotelian thought, which he fully embraced when discussing the unity and incorporeality of God. This is evident in their basic stances, where al-Ghazālī attempted to adopt reason as a tool per se in understanding revelation. On the other hand, Maimonides believed that philosophy is embedded within Judaism and he was

⁴⁷ *Ibid* 69. See also Flethcer, M. "Ibn Tumart's teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī", *Al-Qantara* 18, 1997, 305-330.

⁴⁸ Strauss phrased the acquaintance as 'considerable interest.' In Strauss 'The Translator's Introduction.' *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Pg cxxvii.

therefore very much inclined to demonstrate the philosophical thought within the Scriptures.

Nevertheless, certain discrepancies between the two scholars include their theories regarding God's knowledge and the positive-negative attributes of God that subsequently establish the notion of divine unity. This discrepancy is due to the great influence of Greek philosophy on Maimonides. However, for the scope of this study, the two scholars' imminence and comprehensive understanding of their religions and discussing God in particular, is the main factor in exploring the developmental thinking on divine unity through the lens of these two prominent scholars.

Apart from the above factors, writings and research have also been done to compare al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. For instance, a comparison of spiritual pleasures has been done and another of repentance.⁴⁹ However, those studies do not explore al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' notions of God. Hence, the present study serves as an important document in research on al-Ghazālī and Maimonides with respect to the metaphysical discourse.

1.7 Literature Review

Notwithstanding the significant number of texts on divine unity, the researcher found no study that specifically deals with al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on the concept of God. Needless to say, comparisons of the concept of God in Islam and Judaism are very limited in contrast to Islam and Christianity, which have been studied extensively.⁵⁰ As mentioned earlier, the exclusiveness of each religion is likely the

⁴⁹ Eran, Amira. "Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides on the World to Come and Spiritual Pleasures," in: *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 8 (2001), 137–166. See also Stern, Martin. 1979. Al-Ghazālī, Maimonides and Ibn Paquda on repentance: A comparative model. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. (4) 47.

⁵⁰ One of the studies was done by Muhammad Iqbal Afaqi as a comparative study on the concept of God in Islamic and Christian epistemology. See Muhammad Iqbal Afaqi. *Knowledge Of God: A*

cause of the small number of comparisons between Islam and Judaism. Therefore, the insufficient texts on comparisons of these two religions makes the current research significant to the study of comparative theology.

To the researcher's knowledge, three scholarly works precisely compare the concept of God in Islam and Judaism. One is a work by Williams⁵¹ called '*Tajalli wa Ru'ya: A study of anthropomorphic theophany and Visio Dei in the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an and early Sunni Islam*'. His PhD thesis focused on the discourse of anthropomorphism and specifically on the visibility of God to His messengers. It argued that both the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an qualify the visibility of God, without affirming it through the view of early Sunni Islam that refers to the Hanabilite school of thought. It leads to the conclusion that Islam and Judaism do not contrast in apprehending theophany. The thesis did not specify any Muslim or Jewish scholars either. Besides, it only focused on one school of thought, which does not represent other Muslims in general. However, the current study highlights al-Ghazālī and Maimonides who addressed anthropomorphism in the Holy Scriptures along with logical arguments.

Another comparative study by Abdulrazak Abdulahi Hashi⁵² as a PhD thesis emphasized the concept of monotheism in Islam, Christianity and Judaism, where monotheism served as the measure of comparison. The different concepts of monotheism in the Abrahamic faiths were argued and it was concluded that Islam is an absolute monotheism. Meanwhile, Judaism went through an evolution in the

Comparative Study of Christian and Islamic Epistemology. (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2011). The author concludes with a pluralistic understanding of salvation, which agrees on multiple paths to the same goal. It certainly confides with the soteriological pluralism of Hick and is therefore not acceptable to the Quranic concept of plurality. Thus, this thesis will analyze both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' views on the Divinity and conclude based on the comparative method from the Islamic perspective.

⁵¹ Williams, Wesley. *Tajalli wa Ru'ya: A Study of Anthropomorphic Theophany and Visio Dei in the Hebrew Bible, the Quran and Early Sunni Islam*. PhD Thesis. (University of Michigan, 2008)

⁵² Abdulrazak Abdulahi Hashi. *Islamic transvaluation of the Jewish and Christian Concepts of Monotheism*. PhD Thesis (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2008)

understanding of God and it was more suitable to be labeled as henotheistic or monolateral monotheism, which accepts that other Gods can be worshipped by respective believers while adhering to one particular God. This thesis did not elaborate in-depth on a theological comparison of the Jewish concept of God. It only measured the monotheistic concept through a historical account. This study differs from the previous thesis in that it focuses on a theological discussion of God, and particularly on attributes as well as anthropomorphism, which determine the unity of God.

Next, a thesis on anthropomorphism in the *Pentateuch* was done by Knafl.⁵³ It comprises six typologies of anthropomorphism consisting of corporeal, proximate, interactive, characteristic, social and mediated. The main argument that is contradictory to the current study is the corporeality of God in the Pentateuch. Maimonides clearly rejected the corporeality of God by affirming His unity. Understanding the corporeality of God negates His divinity and therefore contradicts the nature of God Himself. Hence, this study is essential in arguing the conception of corporeality that has been proposed by some scholars.

Another study regarding anthropomorphism elaborated anthropomorphism referred to in the Qur'an and the Bible, including comparisons between anthropomorphism in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. It was concluded that the Rabbinic Jews anthropomorphized God and rejected philosophical and transcendental views of God. Meanwhile, Christians' theology was more of an incarnational theology, which definitely indicates anthropomorphism and corporeality since it is not possible to separate humans from divine logos. The Islamic conception of God certainly refuted anthropomorphism and the corporeality of God, which is in agreement with

⁵³ Knafl, Anne Katherine. *Forms of God, Forming God: A Typology of Divine Anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch*. Phd Thesis. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011)

metaphorical interpretation.⁵⁴ This study, however, proves that Maimonides, who was also a Rabbinic Jew, did not accept anthropomorphic forms in the Bible literally. In fact, this study demonstrates that Maimonides strongly upheld the allegorical method in comprehending the verses.

In a study by Abdul Jalil Mia,⁵⁵ only the concept of unity was addressed. The discussion was approached from different aspects, such as the historical development of divine unity, scientific proof, philosophical implications and spiritual experience. From the philosophical aspect, the author returned to the self-conviction of believing in the existence of a divine unity because the arguments of ontology (the idea of reality), cosmology (the idea of a first cause), teleology (the idea of a design and purpose of nature) and morality (the idea of a perfect being) can hardly prove the existence of God conclusively. Besides, Mia also mentioned the universalistic God in Islam, whereas in Judaism God is commonly perceived as being simply the God of Israel. Nevertheless, the study elaborated on the concept of unity in general but did not mention any scholars' works on the concept of God specifically.

Similarly, Yaran⁵⁶ asserted five arguments on the existence of a divine unity, comprising ontology, cosmology, teleology, morality and religious experience. In Islamic thought, three major arguments that have been discussed extensively include ontology, cosmology and teleology. The author argued that the cosmological argument from the Islamic perspective superseded teleological argument and prevailed over ontological argument. This book solely covered discourses from the realm of Islamic scholars per se without relating to other religious philosophical thought.

⁵⁴ Zulfikar Ali Shah. *A Study of Anthropomorphism and Transcendence in the Bible and Qur'an Scripture and God in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic Traditions*. PhD Thesis. (Lampeter: University of Wales, 1997)

⁵⁵ Abdul Jalil Mia. *Concept of Unity*. (Dacca: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1980)

⁵⁶ Yaran, Cafer. *Islamic Thought on the Existence of God*. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003)

In a comparative study of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, a conference⁵⁷ held in Morocco largely illuminated the discussions of these two philosophers from the east and west in terms of their points of convergence and divergence. It highlighted their representativeness of their religious views and localities. In addition, the conference stressed on the meeting points of both in upholding the creedal belief in God, whereby God is knowable through the revealed texts and is supported by reason. Moreover, the notion of God must also be taken figuratively and allegorically, as God is not limited to our intellectual reasoning. Besides, their resurgence in the fields of *Kalam* and philosophy revitalized the scholastic era of the golden age from the blind imitation of the Mu'tazilite rationalistic theological implication to the mainstream Muslim and Jewish thought.

A study on al-Ghazālī and Maimonides was also done by Harvey,⁵⁸ who demonstrated similarities between al-Ghazālī's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, which contain a similar chapter called 'The Book of Knowledge.' The convergence is shown simply through the title itself that contains the word 'knowledge.' The study also included a discussion of both treatises, outlining the basic principles of creedal belief. *Ihya'* contains the religious law of a Muslim's daily obligations, while *Mishneh Torah* serves more as a legal codex for the Jewish. Besides, an epistemology of knowledge is mentioned in these two major works as well. Thus, Harvey's work is certainly significant to the study of exploring underlining similarities between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. Nevertheless, Harvey only addressed similarities between the two scholars at the surface in its structure of writing. He did not further elaborate on any similarities in their theological and philosophical discourses.

⁵⁷ *Halāqah al-Aṣl Baina Al-Syarq wa al-Gharb*: Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī wa Musa Ibn Maimun. 1986. Morocco: Nadwah Akadimiyyah of Morocco.

⁵⁸ Harvey, Steven. "Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides and their Books of Knowledge" J.M. Harris (ed.), Be'erot Yitzhak – *Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, 2005, 99–117

A comparative study of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides was also found in an article that focuses on the model of repentance of the two scholars and Ibn Paquda, a Jewish scholar. The comparison indicated their parallels in the concepts of sin, guilt and the relationship of man with God. It is very important to highlight that man has choice, which is a prevalent theological debate. The author opined that al-Ghazālī possibly influenced Maimonides although both lived in different periods and settings. Thus, what may bind them are al-Ghazālī's treatises, which Maimonides might have imitated indirectly and applied in enumerating Jewish teachings.⁵⁹

In a critical work, '*Proofs of Eernity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*,' Davidson⁶⁰ recognized similarities between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides in their claims on the creation of the universe. However, Davidson claimed that the diverging point between the two scholars stems from their distinctive arguments. Al-Ghazālī refuted necessary causation from being attributed to God in discussing creation. However, Maimonides agreed with the Aristotelian methods of argument on necessary causation, while on the other hand, he also employed the theory of will and particularization that entails him accepting the theory of creation. Davidson's writing certainly serves quite an important role in the topic discussed in the present study. However, his study did not incorporate a comprehensive discussion of God's attributes and actions, which are linked and discussed accordingly in this study.

Among Muslim philosophers, Maimonides was often associated with Ibn Rushd owing to their similar cultural backgrounds and times. Majid Fakhry's⁶¹ *Dirasat fi al-Fikri al-'Arabiyy* is a comparative study of Ibn Rushd, Maimonides and Thomas

⁵⁹ Stern, Martin. "Al-Ghazālī, Maimonides and Ibn Paquda on Repentance: A Comparative Model" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 4, 47, 1979

⁶⁰ Davidson, Herbert. *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in the Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)

⁶¹ Majid Fakhry. *Dirāsāt fī al-Fikrī al-'Arabiyy*. (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Wa al-Nasyr, 1970) 183-198

Aquinas. In discussing the eternity of the world, he argued that Maimonides' Aristotelian defense was less concrete than Ibn Rushd's. On the other hand, Ibn Rushd did not necessarily defend Aristotle's view on eternity but came up with a stronger contradiction and claim regarding the eternity of the world, while Maimonides eventually agreed with a created world. Fakhry's study is therefore essential to bringing up al-Ghazālī's view, who also claimed the world was created while at the same time refuted Aristotle's arguments.

In another study of Maimonides, Burrell⁶² closely compared Maimonides to Ibn Sīnā and Thomas Aquinas in terms of the philosophical discussion on God. Burrell divided the argument into essence, existence, attributes, names, knowledge and cosmology. Through the comparative attempts to expound the reciprocal thinking of the three scholars from different religious background, Thomas Aquinas seems to monopolize the discussion, whereby the remarks at the end indicate Thomas Aquinas' superiority in having successfully embraced Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides and having posited a middle way. Meanwhile, the study deduced that in an attempt to explicate philosophy as part of the Law, Maimonides advocated a synthesis of theological and philosophical arguments that causes perplexities in comprehending the notion of God.

1.7.1 Al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī's concept of God has been extensively recounted. For instance, Fadlou Shehadi⁶³ wrote essays on al-Ghazālī's idea of a unique and unknowable God. The uniqueness can have two interpretations. First, God's attributes are different from His creations. Second, God's uniqueness is an expression of the complete different forms,

⁶² Burrell, David. *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas*. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1986)

⁶³ Shehadi, Fadlou. *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964)

or God is unlike anything else. An unknowable God refers to the mysterious essence of God that no one knows. In his essay, Shehadi found no inconsistencies between God's uniqueness and unknowability, as the attributes are practical with respect to man. Contradiction arises with regards to God's unknowability and the concept of revelation, for it is impossible for God to reveal in a state of unknowing.

The most debatable subject to al-Ghazālī is causality, which is related to the cosmological creation of God. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi elaborated extensively on the causality and knowledge of God according to al-Ghazālī, in opposition to the majority of philosophers during his time. This was due to his inclination toward the Ash'arite theological stance on God as the Agent and not the Cause. Nevertheless, the author accepted that al-Ghazālī did not deny the law of causality in accordance with the governance of the world. Zarkasyi effectively reconciled al-Ghazālī's idea with unsubscribing the necessity for a connection between cause and effect in the creation of the world. In relation to this thesis, the concept of causality seems to bind the theological interpretations of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, which share the same notion of a divine will in connection with the created world. This is seen as a converging position, whereby Maimonides seems to be in agreement with al-Ghazālī on this matter.⁶⁴

Moreover, a recent thesis by Azmil Zainal Abidin advocates al-Ghazālī's argument against the philosophers by emphasizing God as the Decisive Agent (*al-Fai'l al-Mukhtar*). This thesis is very relevant to the current study, as the argument indirectly addresses three main topics: the agent, the object and the relation between them. Consequently, these three main elements are the fundamental divergences between the philosophers and theologians, including al-Ghazālī and Maimonides.

⁶⁴ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi. *Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Causality with Reference to His Interpretations of Reality and Knowledge*. (Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2010)

From these three matters emerge the problems of attributes, actions and creations, which form the principal discussion in this study.⁶⁵

Hāmid Dar' Abd Rahmān al-Jumailī⁶⁶ advocated a comprehensive theological perception of al-Ghazālī regarding God, prophecy and the hereafter. Beside the theological discussion, the author included al-Ghazālī's refutation of the philosophers in their three main assertions that lead to *kufr*. Al-Ghazālī's theological discussion began with a discourse on God's being and attributes, followed by human fate, which is directly related to God's will. Al-Jumailī's book summarizes al-Ghazālī's thought in his two treatises, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* and *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* without ignoring *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* but with a limited discussion.

Another critical essay of al-Ghazālī can be seen in the writing of Sulaiman Dunya,⁶⁷ a scholar from al-Azhar University. He discusses al-Ghazālī's argument on the divine truth from the theological perspective through illuminating the necessary aspects of existence, essence, knowledge, will and power. Moreover, his critical evaluation was also accustomed towards the peripatetic (*mashshaiyyah*) philosophers, whom al-Ghazālī refuted. In comparison with the previous work of al-Jumailī, the later work seems to initiate a more critical evaluation. Nevertheless, both treatises successfully contribute to the corpus reading of al-Ghazālī and are thus valuable references to this thesis.

In a thesis prepared by Treiger,⁶⁸ he particularly discussed al-Ghazālī's disclosure on the science of Divine. He extensively deliberated the classification of sciences according to al-Ghazālī and analyzed it comparatively with Avicenna's. This

⁶⁵ Azmil Zainal Abidin. *Wacana Rububiyyah Allah Menurut al-Ghazālī dalam Menangani Dimensi Ghā'iyah Filsuf Muslim: Terjemahan dan Analisis Teks Terpilih Daripada Kitab Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. PhD Thesis. (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2011)

⁶⁶ Al-Jumailī, Hāmid Dar' Abd Rahmān. *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa Arāu'hu al-Kalāmiyyah*. (Lubnan: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2005)

⁶⁷ Sulaiman Dunya. *Al-Haqīqah fī al-Naẓr al-Ghazālī*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif. N.d.

⁶⁸ Treiger, Alexander. *The Science of Divine Disclosure: Ghazali's Higher Theology and Its Philosophical Underpinnings*. PhD Thesis. (Yale University, 2008)

study focuses more on the twofold approach of Sufism and philosophical reasoning by al-Ghazālī in attaining the divine knowledge. Whereas the current research will particularly examine his theological discourse on divine unity through God's essence, attributes and actions.

Meanwhile, with respect to anthropomorphism, Mohd Abduh Abu Samah⁶⁹ in his dissertation deliberates on the sections of *Ilahiyyat* in *Kitab Qawa'id al-'Aqai'd* in al-Ghazālī's *Ihya'*. He identifies al-Ghazālī's different methodologies in interpreting *mutasyabihat*, or anthropomorphic verses, which he argues were written comprehensively for the layman and the learned man that includes consigning meaning to God and the application of the allegorical method (*ta'wil*). While Mohd Fuad Mokhtar⁷⁰ recognizes and explains three main methods applied by al-Ghazālī in his treatise of *al-Iqtisad fī al-I'tiqad*. It comprises *al-sabr wa al-taqsim*, *al-qiyas al-mantiqi* and *al-ilzam*. The author then compares al-Ghazālī's methods to Abu Hasan al-Ash'arī and Ahmad ibn Hanbal who were from different generations. Al-Ash'arī was then reckoned to be inclined towards using the traditionalist method, similar to Ibn Hanbal. The traditionalist's method of proving the existence of God basically refers hugely to verses from the Quran and Hadith (prophetic traditions). Whereas al-Ghazālī, in his defense against *ahl al-bid'* during his time, was more inclined to apply *qiyas al-mantiqi*. Thus, it can be observed that the anthropomorphic discussion in both studies is essential to this research in recognizing al-Ghazālī's comprehensive method in contrast to Maimonides' approach.

⁶⁹ Mohd Abduh Abu Samah. *Pemikiran akidah al-Imam al-Ghazālī dalam Kitab Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn: Analisis Terhadap Kitab Qawā'id al-I'tiqād*. Masters dissertation. (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2006)

⁷⁰ Mohd Fuad Mokhtar. *Metodologi Perbahasan Akidah Menurut al-Ghazālī: Kajian terhadap kitab al-Iqtisad fī al-I'tiqad*. Masters dissertation. (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2006)

1.7.2 Maimonides

As mentioned previously, Maimonides' main concern regarding God was His unity and incorporeality. Harry A. Wolfson⁷¹ described Maimonides's concept as a philosophical argument of the absolute simplicity of unity. Wolfson attempted to compare the Islamic view on the unity of God with that of Maimonides' notion of the incorporeality of God. Maimonides appeared to be in line with the philosophers and Mu'tazilite who denied that God has attributes. The question of the heretic belief in God in both Islam and Judaism was central in this article. In defense of Maimonides, Wolfson concluded that only idolatry would bring a Jew to heresy, while those who subscribe attributes or a body to God are equivocally not heretics.

Wolfson's view contradicts Kellner⁷² who conceived heresy typologies as suggested by Maimonides and other medieval philosophers as invalid. Faith, according to the rabbis of the Talmud, is best understood in terms of loyalty, faithfulness and commitment rather than reflecting on propositional content. Saadiah Gaon for instance proposed a parallel meaning of *amanat* in Judaism, which is supposed to mean 'doctrines accepted as an act of religious faith' to *I'tiqadat* as 'doctrines subject to an attitude of firm belief as the result of speculation.' Maimonides further affirmed the principles of faith and idolatry that need to be discussed in greater detail to those who wish to convert. Kellner concluded that confirming heresy depends on two different interpretations of belief. First, belief that only conforms to fundamentally attitudinal terms does not lead one to heresy if one is mistaken with respect to certain teachings of the Torah. Second, belief that conforms to specific content requires a Jew to be committed to God and his Torah.

⁷¹ Wolfson, Harry Austryn. "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God." *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. 56 (2). 1965, 112-136.

⁷² Kellner, Menachem. "Heresy and the Nature of Faith in Medieval Jewish Philosophy." *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. 77 (4). 1987, 299-318

Maimonides was relentlessly criticized on his controversial *Guide of the Perplexed*. Leaman,⁷³ for instance, explained the deficiency of Maimonides' arguments regarding God's attributes and the contradictions between him, al-Ghazālī and Averroes. Leaman concluded that Averroes was in the middle, between al-Ghazālī's conception of univocal and Maimonides' conception of equivocal. The author further demonstrated the inconsistency in Maimonides' claim that it is more appropriate to talk about God's actions than God's qualities. Leaman stated this claim contradicts the Bible verses that mention God's anger as an example. However, Leaman reasoned out the normality of inconsistencies in being targeted towards different audiences: the layman and the intellectual.

On the other hand, Kasher⁷⁴ defended Maimonides' position of being labeled as inconsistent in producing contradictive theologies between a self-cognizing intellect that determines a superlative God and negative attributes that define a completely other God. According to Sholomo Pines in his introduction on *The Guide of Perplexed*, 'God cognizes Himself' is a positive statement that contradicts Maimonides' negative theology, which negates any attributes of God, for a cognizing intellect also exists within humans. Therefore, Hannah Kasher argued for the equivocal approach suggested by Maimonides. Kasher also touched upon the argument of God being superlative and at the same time unique.

Leo Strauss stressed Maimonides' central claim on the incorporeality of God and His unity, which is important for Jews. The consequence of not believing in God's incorporeality entails idolatry. Therefore, God's unity affirms there is no other god and His incorporeality affirms no images and bodies. Strauss then insisted that Maimonides was a Jew and not a philosopher, as *The Guide of the Perplexed* is for

⁷³ Leaman, Oliver. *Moses Maimonides*. (Great Britain: Curzon Press, 1997)

⁷⁴ Kasher, Hannah. "Self-Cognizing Intellect and Negative Attributes in Maimonides' Theology" *The Harvard Theological Review*. 87 (4). 1994, 461-472

Jews in general. However, he also mentioned there are public and secret teachings through which one must first become a believing Jew, who will be perfect in religion, as perplexity might cause deviation.⁷⁵

In contrast to Strauss, Fox⁷⁶ argued that *The Guide of the Perplexed* may be suitable as both a Jewish book and a philosophical book. He insisted that Maimonides was the one who instigated a middle path between the rationalistic Karaites and the religious mainstream Rabbinate. Besides, Maimonides is considered the first to have emphasized the dogmatic belief of the Torah, which includes the unity of God, as opposed to what is generally known in Judaism with focus on ethics and practices more than creedal belief.

Similarly, Hartman⁷⁷ argued that in his magnum opus, *The Guide*, Maimonides explicitly demonstrated his effort to rationalize the Torah teachings through a philosophical framework. However, he further argued that Maimonides did not ignore the Torah as the pure revelation, as demonstrated through his limitation of the intellect to know metaphysics that are beyond human capability to grasp.

In another study, Kenneth Seeskin⁷⁸ advocated the relevance of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* in today's context. Apparently, the strict monotheism upheld by Maimonides does not remain as simple as the layman supposes. However, to understand true monotheism, Seeskin suggested looking at Maimonides' discussion on understanding the concept of God. Moreover, Davidson⁷⁹ wrote a book on

⁷⁵ Moses Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. S. Pines (trans). (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963)

⁷⁶ Fox, Marvin. *Interpreting Maimonides: Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy*. 54: 2, 356. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990)

⁷⁷ Hartman, David. *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest*. (USA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976)

⁷⁸ Seeskin, Kenneth. *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*. (New Jersey: Behrman house. 1991)

⁷⁹ Davidson, Herbert. *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Maimonides with focus on collections of Maimonides' writings. Davidson supported similar ideas of al-Ghazālī as reiterated by Maimonides in his texts.

Kraemer⁸⁰ wrote a full account of Maimonides' life in different places from Andalus to Egypt. His account is more about Maimonides' biography instead of his theological argumentations. Kraemer was among those supporting the idea that Maimonides converted to Islam. Another author who discussed Maimonides comprehensively including his life background along with his theological arguments is Stroumsa.⁸¹ Her writing captures Maimonides as a Mediterranean thinker and emphasizes understanding Maimonides in a diverse multi-confessional culture. Stroumsa covered the full range of Maimonides' writings from law to philosophy and medicine. Rudavsky⁸² was another author who wrote about Maimonides' accounts in a comprehensive manner. Rudavsky covered anecdotes of Maimonides' life, philosophical influence and his theological arguments including on the nature of God. Rudavsky's book elaborates the concept of God in the most detailed manner compared to other biographical books on Maimonides.

The literature above demonstrates a twofold aspect of this study. First, it showcases al-Ghazālī's indirect influence on Maimonides' scholarship, despite their different times and settings, but due to al-Ghazālī's widespread influence on the Almohad caliphate from 1121 to 1269.

The second aspect addresses arguments on the concept of God in general, with discussions on His essence, existence, attributes and actions. Prior studies have proven that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses possess similarities, as they both agreed on allegorical interpretation and the concept of particularization. Most of the literature

⁸⁰ Kraemer, Joel. *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilizations' Greatest Minds*. (United States: Doubleday Religion, 2008)

⁸¹ Stroumsa, Sarah. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2009)

⁸² Rudavsky, Tamar. *Maimonides*. (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2010)

indicates converging points between both in their theological discussions of a created world. It is nevertheless well-documented that Maimonides referred to this matter based on the Aristotelian framework. In contrast, al-Ghazālī in his *Tahafut* rebutted the Aristotelian and Avicennean views. But to what extent are their similarities acceptable? Thus this study fills in the gap in exploring more on their similarities apart from their differences. This study accordingly analyzes their discourses on God's concept in terms of His existence, attributes and actions towards identifying the influence and extent of agreement between their discussions which previous studies have yet to explore.

Therefore, this study is essential in describing al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, who respectively represent Islam and Judaism in defending the incorporeality of God due to the monotheistic nature of both religions. The discussion of divine unity during the Middle Ages thrived to the golden age of Islam and Judaism. Hence, the emergence of inter-civilizational dialogue during those golden years can somewhat benefit the present research. Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides cannot merely be seen as legends. Their legacies and discourses have been applied as guidance for religious adherents both in religious matters and inter-civilizational dialogue until the present time. Hence, through illuminating their notions and arguments on God, it is hoped this study will fill the gaps in understanding the concept of God between Islam and Judaism. Besides, this study also serves as an important document in research on al-Ghazālī and Maimonides with respect to the metaphysical discourse.

1.8 Methodology of the Study

This study is a qualitative research. The two main methods employed are data collection and data analysis. First, for data collection, library resources were mainly

utilized to acquire the data, principally on al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. Related literature is basically in the form of books, book articles, journal articles, theses and dissertations, religious scriptures and others. These documents were primarily retrieved via online research tools as well as libraries, namely the University of Malaya Main Library, the Library of Academy of Islamic Studies, Za'ba Library, International Islamic University of Malaysia and the Singapore National Library.

In carrying out the analysis, three essential methods are employed. First, this study inevitably deals with history. The historical method is applied to recognize the background of Islamic and Jewish theology and philosophy in the medieval era. This method basically interrogates the relationship between Islamic and Jewish medieval philosophy and between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. The significance of this method is in identifying al-Ghazālī and Maimonides through the influence of their predecessors and successors on the development of their scholarship. The significance of the historical method also lies in examining the theological matters surrounding the two scholars' eras. Furthermore, although al-Ghazālī and Maimonides did not live in the same age and area, al-Ghazālī somehow managed to influence Maimonides who was born after al-Ghazālī died. This method is mainly applied in chapter two.

The second method employed is a textual analysis of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' treatises with emphasis on theological issues pertaining to the divinity of God. The discussion mainly covers three key aspects of God: His existence and anthropomorphism, attributes and names, and actions. For al-Ghazālī, two books are examined extensively to identify these three aspects: *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*, *al-Iqtisad fī al-I'tiqad (Moderation in Belief)* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)*. The first treatise was written before the latter, but the latter are more comprehensive in terms of the discussion on the theological concept God. As for Maimonides, his treatise of *Dalalat al-Hai'rin*

(The Guide of the Perplexed) and *Mishneh Torah (Repetition of the Torah)* are the treatises that will be referred to, due to the unavailability of a discussion on God in his other books. Textual analysis is applied throughout all chapters.

Textual analysis will also be applied to scriptural verses of the Qur'an and *Tanakh*. The excerpts include verses proving God's oneness, transcendental divinity, attributes, essence and incorporeality or corporeality. The matter that refers most to scriptural verses will be God's incorporeality or corporeality, as both texts present verses that can be interpreted as anthropomorphic with respect to the nature of God and indirectly describe God as possessing human character and forms.

Finally, since this is a comparative theological study, the comparative method is certainly applied in the analysis section. Principally, there are three factors in comparing theologies. One factor it is to highlight similarities and differences between beliefs, which will promote a smoother interfaith dialogue. The second factor is to create awareness and understanding about the other theologies, which will subsequently lead to harmonious co-existence. Third, comparisons of one's belief with others definitely lead to a self-belief check that will indirectly strengthen one's belief.

The possibility of positioning two religions on the same level of truth is perturbing in the quest of comparing. Hence, it is essential to be objective towards other faiths and be affirmative towards one's own faith. As this study rejects John Hick's⁸³ idea of pluralism and transcendental truth according to Schuon⁸⁴ in understanding others, the researcher is accountable for highlighting the differences between both concepts of divine unity to diminish the idea of pluralistic truth among believers. Yet, it is essential to use objective analysis without biased sentiments.

⁸³ John Hick. "Religious Pluralism" in Meister C. & Copan P. (ed) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2007), 216

⁸⁴ Schuon, F. *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. (London: Harper & Row, 1975)

The researcher's position is to elaborate al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discussions contextually and objectively by reporting their arguments. The reason for the comparison is mainly to observe the concept of God in the Jewish monotheistic belief from an analytical view in comparison with monotheistic Islam. Hence, the comparison analysis is intended to uncover commonalities and contradictions in the viewpoints of two great scholars, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides.

Therefore, a comparative theology⁸⁵ analysis of their discourses will help enlighten the similarities and differences in both scholars' quest for knowing the Truth. The method of comparative theology analysis is increasingly being used by religious scholars to bridge religions. Scholar such as Francis X Clooney,⁸⁶ who is regarded as a pioneer of this method, and more recently Maire Byrne, have done massive work based on this methodological framework. Nevertheless, their proposed methodology is meant to encourage comparative theologians to reduce one's own tradition to simple information in order to not deprive the other traditions or impose one's perspective of a tradition onto others. Indeed, this approach is definitely claimed to instill a naturalistic attitude. Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman argued that the naturalistic approach neither forbids a believer to merely dispose of their own religion nor prohibits one from being objective and presenting justice to others.⁸⁷ A true loyal believer, however, must uphold their own religion amidst positioning it in comparison with others to eventually strengthen one's belief.⁸⁸ Thus, it is clear that being objective does not deny

⁸⁵ The analyses of comparative theology by Clooney and Byrne are apologetic. This methodology is an alternative to interfaith dialogue. Francis X. Clooney. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders*. (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

⁸⁶ Clooney, Francis. *Theology after Vendata*. (Albany: Sunny Press, 1993)

⁸⁷ Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman. *Religion and Pluralistic Co-Existence*. (International Islamic University Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2010) 119-120

⁸⁸ Al-Biruni, a renowned Muslim scholar of religious study, described other religions and firmly stated his stand as a Muslim; he did not negotiate his theology in bridging others. Being apologetic, in a sense putting religions on the same level of truth, is unacceptable. This leads to a profound consequence of pluralism, which religious believers are facing today in building bridges. This study, from the perspective of its objectivity, does not negotiate its naturalistic view, even in discussing the one Truth. Hence, it will focus particularly on analyzing al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' texts to extract their concepts

one from upholding their belief. However, objectivity must include perceiving an object as it is and without involving any personal feelings. Any claims must hence be accompanied by a critical and logical approach.

Based on the three methods mentioned above, it can be deduced that this research does not necessitate discussing any research theory for further analysis. If the analysis is carried out by employing either *kalām* or philosophy as the research theory, it would be unjust to the arguments of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. This study thus only highlights the similarities and differences between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. Although both scholars employed different methodologies, there are certainly similarities in their arguments, especially when both referred to their respective Laws, for instance, their arguments on God's necessary existence, created universe and God's will in His actions. Both Scriptures seem to propose a similar concept. However, the interpretations of these two scholars differed according to their adherence to different stances. Hence, the analysis will be mainly based on three data analysis methods, namely historical, textual and comparative analyses.

1.9 Structure of Chapters

The first chapter is an introduction to the thesis. It comprises an explanation of the background of the study along with the objectives, significance and scope of the study. A brief introduction of the two selected scholars is presented along with a justification for the selected topic. The preliminary chapter would not be complete without an extensive literature review that encapsulates this thesis amidst other research studies.

on affirming the unity of God and refuting the undivinity that is subscribed to God in a comparative way. See Sachau, C.E., *Alberuni's India*. (Delhi: S. Chand & Co, 1964)

This chapter concludes with an overview of the different methodologies applied in this study and the systemization of the chapters to provide an overall look into the thesis.

The second chapter presents the backgrounds of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' scholarships. This is essential to fully understand both scholars' circumstances in positioning them amidst other scholars from their respective times. The golden age of Islam in the 11th and 12th centuries certainly shaped Jewish thought. As a result, both civilizations are interrelated. Besides, the backgrounds of the two scholars are also elaborated. This is important to recognize the factors that influenced them in writing their arguments on the concept of God. The presentation of the scholars' backgrounds also demonstrates how the Almohad period served to bind them through their discussions, although they did not live in the same period or place. Departing from this, this study will observe the theological and philosophical influences and stances in their scholarships. This chapter is certainly essential as a foundation for the study.

The third chapter focuses on God's existence as well as anthropomorphic verses according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discussions on existence and anthropomorphism are first elaborated. This is followed by an analysis of their discourses. The existence of God is then analyzed from three main perspectives: proofs of eternal existence, created vs eternal, and the theory of causality. The anthropomorphic analysis focuses on two principal issues deduced from the discourse, namely God's incorporeality and the interpretation of anthropomorphic verses. This chapter is somewhat longer than the two preceding chapters because it encompasses two discussions, which are combined to describe God's essence overall.

In the fourth chapter, the perspectives on the attributes and names of God according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides are highlighted. This is followed by an analysis of three key topics: the position of attributes with regards to God's essence,

essential attributes and names of God. The discussion on names is combined with that on attributes, as both discussions are closely related.

Chapter five explains the discourse on the acts of God in terms of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' writings. The analysis emphasizes three main discussions: the concept of evil; rewards and punishments; and God's power, will and knowledge in relation to His actions. Similarities and differences between the two scholars' arguments and the factors behind the converging and diverging points are presented.

Finally, the sixth chapter concludes with a summarization of the entire study, from the backgrounds of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides to their discourses on God's existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names and actions. A final analysis and suggestions are presented in conclusion to this study.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER TWO

AL-GHAZĀLĪ AND MAIMONIDES: BACKGROUND AND SCHOLARSHIP

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the backgrounds of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides and their standpoints on theology and philosophy. Apart from the fact that the two were prominent scholars in their respective religions, they shared similar interests in metaphysical exposition. Both substantially contributed to philosophy and theology within Arabic literature. Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides wrote significant treatises on their creedal beliefs in rational explanation in attempting to harmonize reason with the Scriptures. This is where their opinions departed. Al-Ghazālī appears to have inclined towards *Kalam*, a school of thought that Maimonides rejected, whereas Maimonides was or at least endeavored to be an Aristotelian, which al-Ghazālī opposed. Nevertheless, both exhibited some similarities in discussing particularization and the will of God besides the created universe. Thus, this chapter serves as an introduction to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on the concept of God. Full discussions about al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' stances on the existence, anthropomorphism, attributes and actions of God will be further elaborated in the following chapters.

2.1 Al-Ghazālī's Background and Scholarship

2.1.1 Biographical Sketch of al-Ghazālī

Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Tusi Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī⁸⁹ was born in 450/1058 in Tus. He was known as Abu Hamid and also al-Ghazālī, an honorific title given due to his son's death before birth.⁹⁰ At times, he was also called al-Tusi in reference to his birthplace. He had a brother who was a distinguished scholar and mystic named Ahmad,⁹¹ and several sisters. According to Watt, one of his uncles was also a scholar in Tus. His father was believed to have been a simple, pious, ordinary Muslim with considerable knowledge of the Qur'an and Islamic traditions through learning at the mosque. This clearly explains his intellectual surrounding and inspiration.⁹²

When his father died, al-Ghazālī and his brother were sent under the care of his father's Sufi friend, Sheikh Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Razakani⁹³, along with some money. Unfortunately, it was only a short time before they became financially unstable and the brothers were sent to *madrasah* (school) where they received free education. He learnt *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) in his hometown from al-Radzakani and then

⁸⁹ The argument of subjecting his name to his birthplace was through the narration of Ka'ab al-Ahbar's daughter as mentioned by Syihab al-Khafaji. Murtada al-Zabidi, Muhammad bin Muhammad. *Ithaf al-Sadah al-Muttaqin bi-Sharh Asrar Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, (Beirut: Darl al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah), V.1, 24. According to Watt, Ghazali is preferred over Ghazzali, which refers to his father being a vendor or spinner of wool, since it appears to be an inference from the less probable spelling and derivation of the name al-Ghazālī. W. Montgomery Watt. *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*. (USA: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 20. Whereas Ibn al-Athir dominantly used al-Ghazzali instead of al-Ghazālī through his argument that it is common among the Jurjan and Khawarizm communities to adopt names after their occupations. This was also confirmed by al-Nawawi in *Tibyan*, Imam al-Dhahabi in *al-Ibar* and Ibn Khalikan in *Tarikh*. However, this cannot refer to al-Ghazālī, as historians and scholars opine that al-Ghazālī refers to his birthplace more than al-Ghazālī being in reference to his father's occupation.

⁹⁰ Che Zarrina Sa'ari. 2007. Al-Ghazālī and intuition: An analysis, translation and text of *al-Risalah al-Ladunniyyah*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya. Pg 1. See also Osman Bakar. *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur. 1992, 172. Whereas according to Watt, Abu Hamid does not necessarily demonstrate that he had a son, as it is known he had only a daughter. See Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, 20.

⁹¹ His name was Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Tusi. He was a *Sufi* and well-versed in Islamic traditions. He summarized his brother's writing of *Ihya'* in one volume apart from writing his own book regarding understanding of the *al-baṣīrah* part of Sufi teaching. See Taj al-Din `Abd al-Wahhab ibn `Ali al-Subki. *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyāt al-Kubrā*. (N.p: N.p.p, 1907), 54

⁹² Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, 20.

⁹³ Al-Subki, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyāt al-Kubrā*. 193.

travelled to Jurjan to learn from Abi Nasr Isma'ili.⁹⁴ After completing his learning and while returning to Tus, he was robbed. Among the stolen belongings were his notes, but he managed to persuade the robbers to return them. Upon arriving in Tus, he memorized all his notes within three years.

He was married at the age of almost twenty and when he met his master, al-Juwaynī, he already had three children.⁹⁵ In 1077, he continued his quest of seeking knowledge in Naysabur at the recently founded Nizamiyya College, where he learnt from al-Juwaynī till the master's death. He succeeded in embodying knowledge of *kalām*, philosophy and logic. He was then called upon by Nizam al-Mulk and later appointed chief professor at Nizamiyya in 1091. In 1095, he left his career for the pilgrimage to Mecca. After that, he underwent unique spiritual experiences that led him to Sufism, detaining himself from having a lavish life. In 1105 or 1106, he was called again by Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Nizam al-Mulk, to fill in the position of professor at Nizamiyyah College. He accepted the offer in the hopes of disseminating his knowledge on Sufism. In 1111, he died in Tus due to sickness.⁹⁶ As mentioned by Taj al-Din al-Subki, al-Ghazālī was the reviver (*mujaddid*) of faith in the Islamic world in the late 5th/11th century. He was also famously known as *ḥujjah al-Islam* and *muḥijjah al-dīn* who came to the Muslim world collating knowledge and dissipating the confusion that had stricken the community in refuting philosophy and reviving the glorious time of the Muslim golden age.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Al-Zabidi, Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Husainy. *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharh Asrār Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 8

⁹⁵ Sidik Hj Baba. *Riwayat Hidup Imam al-Ghazālī. The Life History of Imam al-Ghazālī*, Seminar al-Imam al-Ghazālī dan Sumbangannya. (Kuala Lumpur, 1988), 3

⁹⁶ W. Montgomery Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1985) 86- 89

⁹⁷ Ayman Shihadeh. "From al-Ghazālī to al-Razi: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*. 15. 2005, 141-179 See also al-Zabidi, *Ithaf*, 8

Al-Ghazālī's refutation of philosophy in the 11th century was very much relevant during the emergence of atheism, and moral and political crises.⁹⁸ He is seen to have refuted philosophy through logical thinking and dialectical arguments, with which he could rebut philosophers' arguments. His magnificent contribution is also apparent in countering the Batinites.

According to Hourani, al-Ghazālī's intellectual journey can be generally divided into four parts: a) a period of teaching and writing commencing from al-Juwaynī's death. This is when al-Ghazālī produced his law and jurisprudence writings, such as *al-Mustasfa*, *al-Basit*, *al-Wasit* and *al-Wajiz*. During his spare time, as mentioned in *Munqidh*, he read theology and philosophy on his own and completed his first philosophy book *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, which encompasses the Aristotelian logic and an introduction to *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.⁹⁹ He simultaneously wrote *Mi'yār al-'Ilm fī Fann al-Manṭiq* and *Mihakk al-Nazar fī al-'Ilm al-Manṭiq*.¹⁰⁰ His treatise *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* followed, but no later than the second half of 1095 a crisis within himself began transpiring. *Al-Iqtisād* is said to have a more constructive theological explanation rather than the rebuttal nature of *Tahāfut*, which al-Ghazālī wrote for the succeeding Muslim theologians. It is also mentioned in *Tahāfut*, *Mi'yār*, *Mihakk* and *al-Mustazhir*, proving that its completion could not have been earlier than 1095. However, Hourani mentioned that *Qawaid al-'Aqaid* is probably a forward reference to the *Tahāfut*.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, according to Badawi, *Kitab Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* was also known as *al-Risalah al-Qudsiyyah*, which was written during his short stay in

⁹⁸ Al-Nadawi, Abu Hasan 'Ali. *Rijāl al-Fikr wa al-Da'wah fī al-Islām*. (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam), 179

⁹⁹ Hourani, G.F. "The Chronology of Ghazali's Writing," *Journal of American Studies* 79 (1959), 225-233

¹⁰⁰ *Mi'yār* was written first but published later. *Mi'yār* was mentioned in *Tahāfut* as *Mi'yār al-'Aql* that proves the ongoing process of writing it adjacent to the *Tahāfut*. Meanwhile, both books are mentioned in *Iqtisād*.

¹⁰¹ Hourani explains that al-Ghazālī might have changed its name. Hourani, G.F. "The Chronology of Ghazali's Writing," *Journal of American Studies* 79 (1959), 225-233

Jerusalem. Only after his return to Baghdad was it compiled into *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.¹⁰²

2.1.2 Background of al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī's emergence during the turmoil of the third phase of the Abbasid caliphate witnessed its own political turmoil. The Muslim territory expansion caused the caliphate's weakening management outside Baghdad due to internal and external factors. In al-Ghazālī's time, Seljuqs' reign had reached its peak since its emergence in the 10th century, which partly caused the high dissemination of the Batinites' Sufi doctrine of the Shi'ite. Consequently, *Ilm al-kalām* was highly required in order to rebut the deviated doctrine from illuminating the Sunni's Sufi doctrine.¹⁰³

Whereas in the case of knowledge, the establishment of Madrasah al-Nizamiyyah entailed widely flourishing knowledge among Muslim scholars. It was even known as the golden age of Islam, when rigorous assimilation between Muslims, Christians and Jews took place. Islamic knowledge, such as Qur'anic studies, Islamic law and theological studies had surpassed great achievement and advancement. Islamic theology is also distinct with its extensive dialectical approach in debates and arguments.¹⁰⁴

Apart from that, the ideological conflict between the Ash'arites and Hanabalites had also caused a bloody turmoil during the Seljuq reign (1044), but only until the establishment of Madrasah al-Nizamiyyah under Sultan Mas'ud who was

¹⁰² Kitab *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* was also mentioned in *al-Risālah al-Wa'ziyyah*, his letter to Abu al-Fath Ahmad bin Salamat al-Damimi. See al-Badawi, Abd al-Rahman. *Muallafāt al-Ghazālī*. (Kuwait: Wakalah al-Matba'ah, 1977), 26. See also the end of *al-Risālah al-Wa'ziyyah* in al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid Muhammad. *Majmū'ah Rasā'il*. Tahqiq: Yasir Sulaiman Abu Syadi. (Cairo: Dar al-Tawfiqiyyah li al-Turath, 2011), 335

¹⁰³ Al-Jumaili, Hamid Dar' Abd Rahman. *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa Arāu'hu al-Kalāmiyyah*. 19

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*. 23

deeply fond of the Hanafi School. The Sultan attempted to topple the Ash'arites, and he once asked to erase the name of Asy'ari and change it to Syafie. The problem al-Ghazālī encountered was the scholars' ignorance of the essence of Islam, which was veiled by their extreme dwelling upon law and jurisprudence.¹⁰⁵

Theological division was also at its peak around this time when both Mu'tazilites and Shiites remained strong in their rational theological affiliation, while the Salafis were doomed in their failure to counter intellectual argumentation. The Ismailites or Batinites were initiated by al-Hasan bin Sabbah al-Isma'ili, who founded the movement with the claim of the awaited Messiah immune from sins (*ma'sūm*). He insisted the truth could only be learned from the imam. He argued that personal effort (*ijtihād*) in thinking and reasoning (*ra'y and nazar*) could not lead to truth as it always leads to disagreements. It is best summarized that the nature of Isma'ilism is to consider the relation of the government with intellectuals. Watt especially emphasized the ideational foundation of Ismailism compared to Sunnite Islam who had no control over the ideational basis.¹⁰⁶

It is further important to note the theological arguments that emerged around 780 in the field of rational thinking and philosophy known as *Kalam*, whose practitioners were known as the *mutakallimīn* or the theologians. Their basis of argumentation was clearly seen to imitate the Greek method of rational argumentation and conception. Among their eminent claims were the createdness of the Qur'an and free will of humans. In other words, Watt acknowledged their effort to reconcile revelation and reason.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Hussain Amin, *Al-Ghazālī as the Jurist, Philosopher and Mystic*. (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Irsyad, 1963), 15-16

¹⁰⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, 81

¹⁰⁷ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: An Extended Survey*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1985) 91

The argument went deeper into the attributes of God when the word and discourse of God were discussed. Those who opposed the idea of a created Qur'an would tend to say that the Qur'an refers to an attribute of speech. Seven attributes were then recognized as necessary: life, knowledge (omniscience), power (omnipotence), will, hearing, sight and speech. The Mu'tazilites on the other hand affirmed His unity by denying attributes that would cause God to have multiple essences.¹⁰⁸

According to Watt, between the period of al-Ash'arī and al-Ghazālī, the previous school basically improvised and extended their technics to theological discussions. Only few new ideas were emerging from this field, such as the difference between magic and miracles, as Watt remarked "while remaining on the same plane as they were." Only after al-Ma'mun, with the widespread Greek writings being translated into Arabic was theology seen to have become a higher form of discussion.¹⁰⁹

It was also evident that disagreements and debates flourished; hence the illumination of Greek philosophy into Islamic thought was quite apparent. Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā found their methodologies to be the source of truth. Eagerness in applying them resulted in profound influence of Greek philosophy among Muslim philosophers. This entails the neo-Platonic and neo-Aristotelian thought, which is known as the Peripatetic philosophy (*mashshā'iyyah*).¹¹⁰ Both Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī inherited a deep influence of their logical argument. Al-Fārābī was known as the second teacher and Aristotle's successor, who was also influenced by Plato's theory of emanation. Al-Ghazālī's refutation against the philosophers was obvious in his treatise *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. His main refutation pertained to three main issues: (i) the eternity of the universe, (ii) knowledge of God,

¹⁰⁸ Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: An Extended Survey*, 94-95

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/peripati/>. Entry: Peripatetic. 30 August 2016.

which only includes universal characteristics and (iii) the denial of the resurrection of the body.

Apart from al-Ghazālī's participation in intra-religious and philosophical debate, he also participated in inter-religious dialogue. Al-Ghazālī employed *kalām* not only within the Islamic prism. His *kalām* argument was also extended towards Christianity, whereby al-Ghazālī refuted the divinity of Jesus in his treatise *Al-Radd al-Jamīl li al-Ilāhiyyāt Isa bi Sariḥ al-Injīl* (The Excellent Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus through the Text of the Gospel). His refutation was apparent in rebutting the anthropomorphic figure of Jesus that the Christians subscribed to. Al-Ghazālī's argument was that Christians must distinguish between the Divine Text and human text. Textual passages referring to Jesus' divinity should be understood metaphorically or allegorically, while texts that demonstrate his humanity are to be taken literally.¹¹¹ Al-Ghazālī perhaps studied and became familiar with Christianity through the Christian Greeks. Watt claimed that Greek teachings were mainly professed by Christians and the best school was located in Basra during the Abbasid time.¹¹² Therefore, it can be inferred that al-Ghazālī was not only leaning towards intra-religious dialogue but also participated actively in inter-religious dialogue with Christians.

Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī's debate with the Jews is not apparent in any specific book. However, the assimilation of the Muslims, Jews and Christians in Baghdad was widely recognised as early as the 8th century. The Jewish community settled in Iraq as part of the diaspora period, much earlier than the 12th century.¹¹³ In the 10th century, the most famous rabbinic scholar was Saadia Gaon, who led the Jewish academy in

¹¹¹ Nwanaju, Isidore. "Al-Ghazālī and the Christian-Muslim Controversy in the Middle Ages." *Historical Research Letter*. Vol 26, 2015, 3

¹¹² Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*. 37

¹¹³ See Dubnov, Simon. *History of the Jews: From the Roman Empire to the Early Medieval Period*. Spiegel, Moshe (tran). Vol.2. (New York: South Brunswick, 1968), 339

Iraq. In fact, he was the most eminent Jewish exponent of *kalām* with his treatise on theology written in Arabic known as *The Book of Doctrines and Opinions*. During the 11th and 12th centuries, the rabbinic academy disappeared due the rising number of false messiahs. However, several other Jewish institutions (*yeshivot*) that focused on the study of traditional religious texts attempted to solve this problem.¹¹⁴ The employment of *kalām* among Jewish scholars was certainly acknowledged by al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī's philosophical works somehow influenced the Jewish thought indirectly, particularly his treatise *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, which enticed Jewish philosophical students to extract as much information as possible on Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. Thus, it is quite certain that Maimonides, as an Aristotelian student, definitely referred to al-Ghazālī's works.¹¹⁵ Although no direct debate was recorded between al-Ghazālī and Jews as far as this study is concerned, al-Ghazālī nonetheless mentioned in his *Iqtisād* sects of Jews regarding understanding prophecy.¹¹⁶ His address towards Judaism could not be denied blatantly. The Jews in Baghdad were mostly influenced by Mu'tazilite theology and al-Ghazālī's refutation of Mu'tazilite's arguments was perhaps was addressed indirectly towards them as well.¹¹⁷

Therefore, al-Ghazālī's participation in both intra and inter-religious dialogue demonstrates his eminent scholarship.

¹¹⁴ Karesh, Sara & Hurvitz, Mitchell. *Encyclopedia of Judaism*. (New York: Facts on File inc, 2006), 232

¹¹⁵ Kohler, Kaufmann & Broyder, Isaac. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6650-ghazali-abu-hamid-mohammed-ibn-mohammed-al>. 3 April 2016

¹¹⁶ Al-Ghazālī in his *Iqtisād* highlighted two sects of Jews: the 'Aysawites and the Jews. The 'Aysawites were a sect separate from the mainstream Judaism who followed Abu Isa Ishaq ibn Ya'qub al-Asfahani who claimed to be the awaited Messiah in the 8th century. See al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Vol 1, 257-258. The 'Aysawites claimed that prophet Muhammad was a messenger to the Arabs only. While the Jews, according to al-Ghazālī, totally rejected the prophecy of Muhammad including prophet Isa. They claimed there was no prophet after Musa. See al-Ghazālī. *Al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*. 263

¹¹⁷ Kohler, Kaufmann & Broyder Isaac. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6650-ghazali-abu-hamid-mohammed-ibn-mohammed-al>. 3 April 2016

2.1.3 Al-Ghazālī's Theological Stance

Al-Ghazālī was undoubtedly greatly known for his outstanding contribution to the development of *kalām*, especially during the critical period in which creedal belief was at stake with the flourishing Batinite and Mu'tazilite indoctrinations. Besides, the development of *kalām* since the Ash'arite (936AD) period was declining, while the intellectual world concentrated more on law and jurisdiction. Al-Ghazālī's expounding contribution on the subject of *kalām* is evident in several of his treatises, namely *al-Risālah al-Qudsiyyah fī Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* (*The Jerusalem Epistle*), *al-'Arba'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (*Forty Points on the Foundation of Religion*), *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* (*Moderation in Belief*), *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah Bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqah* (*The Criterion of Distinction Between Islam and Zindiq*), *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asma' Allah al-Husna* (*The Brilliant Aim of Explaining Allah's Beautiful Names*) and *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (*The Revival of Religious Sciences*). However, his final work on *kalām*, entitled *Ijam al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām* (*Saving the Layman from Scholastic Theology*) created an imminent contradiction to his earlier standpoint on *kalām*.¹¹⁸

It is essential to discuss his standpoint from the theological perspective due to his inclination towards mysticism in the later phase of his life.¹¹⁹ As defined by Ibn Khaldūn, *kalām* is a speculative theology acting as a tool in defending Islamic creeds and refuting deviated innovations. As the core of the creed is *Tawhid*, understanding and guarding belief from transgression is essential. Furthermore, *mutashabihat* (anthropomorphic) verses lead to different interpretations that may contradict the

¹¹⁸ Fiazuddin Shu'ayb. "Al-Ghazālī's Final Word on *Kalam*," *Islam and Science* 9, no. 2 (2011), 151-172

¹¹⁹ Hussain Amin, *Al-Ghazālī as the Jurist, Philosopher and Mystic*. 15

divine unity of God.¹²⁰ Thus, *kalām* is observed to be an important instrument in demonstrating God's unity and incorporeality, which serve as the essence in Islamic belief.

In the first section of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* of his *Kitab al-'Ilm* he mentioned that *kalām* is categorized under *farḍ al-kifayah* for the Muslim community and is not necessary for every Muslim to learn. Al-Ghazālī acknowledged the aim of *kalām* but at the same time criticized its methodology¹²¹:

“Theologians performed the task to which God invited them; they successfully preserved orthodoxy, defended the creed received from the prophetic source, and rectified heretical innovations. Nevertheless, in doing so, their arguments were based on premises which they took from their opponents and which they were compelled to admit by naïve belief (*taqlīd*), or the consensus of the community, or bare acceptance of Qur'an and Traditions. For the most part their efforts were devoted to making explicit the contradictions of their opponents and criticizing them with respect to the logical consequences of what they admitted. This was of little use in the case of one who admitted nothing at all save logically necessary truths. Theology was not adequate to my case and was unable to cure the malady of which I complained. It is true that when theology appeared as a recognized discipline and much effort had been expended in it over a considerable period of time, the theologians, becoming very earnest in their endeavours to defend orthodoxy by the study of what things really are, embarked on a study of substances and accidents with their nature and properties.”

His position on *Kalām* in *Ijām* opposed his earlier claim in two ways. First, he argued that although dialectical propositions of *Kalām* contain proof that leads one to believe in God's divinity, it would nevertheless only cure a single person's doubt while destroying the other two people. It would surely cure the intellectuals. However,

¹²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn. *Mukaddimah (The Prolegomena)*. (Kuala Lumpur: DBP, 2006), 595

¹²¹ Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, 15

al-Ghazālī questioned how many intellectuals there are compared to laymen.¹²² Beyond that, al-Ghazālī saw little or no benefit of *kalām* for the laymen.¹²³

Secondly, his principle on the abstinence and silence method in apprehending the *mutashabihat* in the Qur'an expounded his commitment to the Hanbalites who rejected allegorical interpretation of *mutashabihat* verses. He further prohibited the public from becoming immersed in allegorical rendition, as it leads to heresy and negative innovations.¹²⁴

Al-Ghazālī categorized those who adopted *kalām* into three groups. One group comprises those who believe it to be compulsory and they are the minority. Second, there are those who prohibit others from learning *kalām*, as it is an innovation the Prophet did not teach. Third, some adopt *kalām* as part of Islamic science.¹²⁵

In determining the necessity to learn *'ilm al-kalām*, al-Ghazālī expounded justly on the context of its learner. First, one must be conscientious with the knowledge and pay heed to it, for deviators would not ease *kalām* practitioners with removing doubts. Secondly, possessing intelligence and eloquence is essential. The unwise and imprudent would certainly be led to foolishness. Third, one must have a righteous character and God-fearing sense in order to avoid their desires from overruling their judgment and to cease their doubts.¹²⁶

Al-Ghazālī concluded that if one follows this guideline, his arguments are commendable and beneficial, as it is also a way of the Qur'an proven with words that could impact believers' souls. He further iterated on the dialectical instance of Ibn Abbas on the Khawarij and Ali regarding predestination that is considered *kalām jalīyy*, an explicit and unequivocal statement. This was the true way of refuting the

¹²² Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad, *Iljam al-'Awwam 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam*. (Cairo: Maktabah al-Ahariyyah li al-Turath, 1998), 61

¹²³ Fiazuddin Shu'ayb. "Al-Ghazālī's Final Word on *Kalam*," 157

¹²⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Iljam al-'Awwam 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam*, 65

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

deviants and guarding the creed. While removing doubt, revealing the truth, knowing things in context and comprehending the mysteries of the apparent words of creedal beliefs do not necessitate *kalām*, they only require one to practice self-struggle (*mujahadah*), containing desires, and clear thinking away from any dialectic arguments.¹²⁷

Kalām only benefits according to the situation and needs. Al-Ghazālī distinguished between a thing that is prohibited on its own and prohibited with respect to others. An example of the first instance is alcohol, which is prohibited due to its intoxicating effects. The second exemplifies the prohibition of selling something while dealing with others, which initially is permissible but becomes prohibited due to its current situation.¹²⁸ The above argument obviously demonstrates al-Ghazālī's opinion on employing the intellect as a mediator in solving problems.

To al-Ghazālī, the intellect acts as a tool in clarifying doubts or customs that are normally exposed to deviated teachings. The intellect is similar to a pair of decent eyes and the law acts as the sun whose rays light up things. The eyes enable a person to have a good look at their surrounding, and without good use of their eyes, one will never be able to see. Similarly, one who only reads the Qur'an without the use of the intellect could never reflect on the gems of the Qur'an. It is like seeing things in dark vision without the aid of the eyes.¹²⁹

In a nutshell, al-Ghazālī's phase of scepticism toward Sufism did not disprove his previous *kalām* work that succeeded his early scholarship. However, his scepticism must be distinguished from what Watt claims to be similar to Descartes' path of

¹²⁷ Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. Vol. 1 (Egypt: al-Maktabah Al-Tawfiqiyah, 2008)

¹²⁸ *Ibid*

¹²⁹ Mahmud Qasim. *Dirasat fi al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah*. (Masr: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1973), 43-44

seeking necessary truths by doubting the infallibility of sense perception.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, he did not disregard the contribution of theology in its aim to defend the creed against heresy as well as Christianity. Therefore, it can be said that al-Ghazālī attained knowledge of God’s divinity primarily through theological discourse followed by Sufism in his final scholarship stages.

2.2 Maimonides’ Background and Scholarship

2.2.1 Biographical Sketch of Maimonides

Moses ben Maimon was born in Cordoba, Spain, on 20 March 1135. His father Maimon was a rabbinical judge of Cordoba. He was also popularly known as Rambam, acronym for Rabbi Mosheh Ben Maimon. After the Almohad conquest in 1148 and prior to the overthrowing of Almoravid, his family left the country and wandered around for approximately eight or nine years. They finally settled in Fez, North Africa, in 1160. Maimonides began writing during his wandering period commentaries of the *Mishnah*, short treatises on logic and the Jewish calendar as well as a commentary on the Talmud and the legal code. After Maimonides’ teacher Judah ha-Kohen ibn Susan died, his family moved to Egypt and remained in Fostat (Cairo).

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Years later, his father died and Maimonides was supported by his brother who imported precious stones. He continued writing and acting as a religious leader of the

¹³⁰ His eminent theory of methodological skepticism doubted all knowledge of religious beliefs to attain results through distinguishing true from false. It differs from philosophical skepticism that questions the possibility of knowledge. Nonetheless, al-Ghazālī’s skepticism is more geared towards the sensorial and intellectual faculty in attaining the necessary truth. Meanwhile, Descartes was skeptical about all knowledge until the end of his life with his well-known principle of “I think therefore I am.” It persuades one to think of things and be doubtful of everything. While al-Ghazālī’s skepticism only occurred over two months and ended with God’s aid through enlightenment of his inner self, which he capsulated during his delving into Sufism. Al-Jumaily, Hamid Dar’ Abd Rahman. *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa Arāu’hu al-Kalāmiyyah*. 309

¹³¹ Shebok, Dan Cohn. *Fifty key Jewish thinkers*. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 142-143

community. He started supporting himself only after his brother died. He then worked as a doctor and became a physician of Egypt's ruler. He finished writing his commentary on *Mishnah* at the age of 33 in 1168. Ten years later in 1178 he completed his *Mishneh Torah*, which comprises 14 books of Biblical and Talmudic law. In 1190, he completed his great philosophical masterpiece, *Guide for the Perplexed*. He died on 13 December, 1204 in Tiberias.¹³²

Maimonides was undeniably amongst the greatest Jewish medieval scholars. Hartman and Yagod argue Maimonides' scholarship through his mastery in both Halakhah (Jewish law) and philosophy. His embodiment of Jewish law could not be contended. No facet of law was unknown to him as he wrote the *Mishneh Torah*¹³³ and summarized the 613 commandments. Besides being a Jewish codifier, he was also a philosopher. Nevertheless, his effort in harmonizing metaphysical philosophy with Jewish traditions entailed arguments and ambiguities towards his philosophical position among later Jewish thinkers.¹³⁴

His scholarship on theological and philosophical arguments is also evident in his writing in the *Epistle of Yemen* and the *Essay on Resurrection*. The *Epistle of Yemen* was written in response to the Jewish crisis in Yemen, who was pressured to convert to Islam. Maimonides was in Egypt and he received a letter with a request for his opinion. The letter was recorded as having been written in 1172 (before the writing of *The Guide*) with the aim to strengthen the people in their faith and not to convert to Islam. Thus, Maimonides' attack on Islam and Christianity was expected in this

¹³² Rosner, Fred. "The Life of Moses Maimonides, a Prominent Medieval Physician," *Einstein Quarterly*, 19. 2002. 125-128

¹³³ Philosophical comments can be found in this treatise as well as the thought on the inherence of rationality within the Law. Maimonides contributed a section on philosophy in the first part of this book known as '*The Book of Knowledge*' which elaborates the fundamental belief system. It is divided into five parts: Foundations of the Law, Ethical Qualities, Torah Study, Idolatry and Repentance. See T.M Rudavsky, *Maimonides*. 10

¹³⁴ Hartman, David & Yagod, Elliott. "God, philosophy and Halakhah in Maimonides' approach to Judaism" In *Multiple Paths to God: Nostre Aetate, 40 years*. John P. Hogan & George F. McLean (Eds). (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 307-309

treatise. Apart from that, Maimonides' *Essay on Resurrection* delivers a controversial argument regarding his thoughts on the concept of afterlife. The Jews in general believed that the resurrection of bodies must take place. Maimonides, however, considered resurrection as only part of the steps in the process of the soul's immortality, whereby bodies do not live forever but the good souls that achieve intellectual perfection will remain.¹³⁵ Thus, his theological thought at times was received well and at times it was debated.

However, by viewing his scholarship from both aspects, it can be concluded that his effort and contribution towards Jewish scholarship is unquestionable. As the basis in Judaism only focuses on practice and not theology, Maimonides was one of the successors who imposed knowledge of God in the first three articles of faith. He did so in order to facilitate Jews to understand God in their practice, which has been widely accepted by Jewish adherents. It is the custom of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles, in a slightly more poetic form, beginning with the words *Ani Maamin* "I believe" every day after the morning prayers in the synagogue.¹³⁶

Among the scholars who influenced Maimonides most were Ibn Rushd, Ibn al-Aflah and one of Abu Bakr al-Shaigh's students. However, he did not mention Ibn Rushd as one of his teachers, although Ibn Rushd's influence was obviously immersed throughout his writing.¹³⁷ It was also proven in a letter written by Maimonides in 1191 that he possessed all of Ibn Rushd's books except for *al-Hiss wa al-Mahsūs*, which was perhaps completed after Maimonides' death. He was said to have read Ibn Rushd for almost 13 years. Ibn Rushd's thoughts on Aristotle are explicit in Ibn Rushd's

¹³⁵ Rudavsky, *Maimonides*. 10

¹³⁶ http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332555/jewish/Maimonides-13-Principles-of-Faith.htm. 12 April 2013

¹³⁷ This is apparent in his letter to his translator Samuel Ibn Tibbon where he mentioned that it is essential to read Aristotle's work with the commentaries of Ibn Rushd besides Alexander of Aphrodisian and Themistius. See Alexander Marx, "Texts by and about Maimonides: The Unpublished Translation of Maimonides' Letter to Ibn Tibbon" *Jewish Quarterly Review*, (1934) 25: 374-381.

writing.¹³⁸ Hence, it can be inferred that Maimonides read Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* as well, which was a response to al-Ghazālī's treatise of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. There is a high probability Maimonides learned the majority of Aristotle's philosophy from the Arab Aristotelians, among whom was Ibn Sīnā. This is parallel to Davidson who iterated that by the age of forty, Maimonides was familiar with the medieval Arabic Aristotelian philosophy.¹³⁹

In the midst of Muslim, Christian and Jew assimilation under the Abbasid Empire, Muslim thought and civilization had also become integrated into other states not governed by Muslims in three ways: first the non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians; second, visitors from outside who came to Muslim states for the purpose of learning; and finally, Muslims migrating to other countries. Mustafa Abd al-Razaq, who wrote in the introduction on Israel and on Maimonides' biography, considered him a Muslim philosopher. Likewise, al-Shahrastani also considered Hunayn bin Ishaq (809-873) both a Christian and Muslim philosopher.¹⁴⁰ Maimonides was not considered a Muslim philosopher due to the mere assumption that he was a Muslim. It was due to his contribution to the scopus of Islamic philosophy in its subject and form not from his being Muslim. As far as this study is concerned, claiming that he was a Muslim philosopher or otherwise is not the issue. Most importantly, his knowledge on Islam was certainly pertinent to the Jewish-Muslim relations during his time.

¹³⁸ This will be further elaborated throughout the analysis. His opinion is very much alike Ibn Rushd's, especially in the discussion on cosmology where both agree on the createdness of the universe, but which is somehow eternal in time. See chapter 3.

¹³⁹ Davidson, Herbert. *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works*. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 98

¹⁴⁰ See al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Vol 1, 257

2.1.2 Background of Maimonides

Maimonides' background certainly had a deep impact on shaping his stance and viewpoint. Living in the golden era of Islam, both halachic and philosophy certainly influenced Maimonides' thought. Moreover, the multi-cultural and religious environment prepared Maimonides to embrace diverse sources of knowledge, mostly written in Arabic. Maimonides' language was Judaeo-Arabic¹⁴¹, which was common for Jewish scholars during his time. This is partly the reason why Maimonides wrote *The Guide of the Perplexed* in Arabic, although his writing can be considered as polemic against Islam. However, Maimonides also wrote in Hebrew in his *Mishneh Torah* for his fellow Jews who may only know or prefer that language.

It is known that Maimonides lived under three different rulings. He lived under Almoravid¹⁴² (*Murabiṭun*) reign for ten years in his childhood before it was toppled by the Almohad (*Muwahḥhidun*). Almoravid was known to offer protection and religious freedom to non-Muslims, as decreed by Muslim law. Contrarily, under Almohad rule, Maimonides faced a strict interpretation of Islamic law, which was less favourable to the non-Muslims, most of whom were forced to convert to Islam. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Almohad theological realm, which was founded by Ibn Tumart, was undoubtedly influenced by al-Ghazālī, a former teacher of Ibn Tumart.¹⁴³ From this fact, it can be inferred that al-Ghazālī certainly influenced Maimonides' writing as evident in the foundational teaching of al-Ghazālī exhibited by Ibn Tumart.

¹⁴¹ He used classic Arabic followed by Hebrew words in the citations. Sarah Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 19. See also Hopkins, S. "The Languages of Maimonides," in *The Trials of Maimonides*. 85-106

¹⁴² One of the Berber dynasties of Morocco that conquered Maghreb and Andalus in the 11th century. The dynasty played a crucial role in defending the land from Christian rule. However, it only stood for 85 years (1065-1147) before being toppled by Berber rebels led by Ibn Tumart.

¹⁴³ Stroumsa, Sarah. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 69. See also M. Flethcer, "Ibn Tumart's Teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī", *Al-Qantara* 18, 1997, 305-330.

The Almohad theological standpoint surely permeated Maimonides' conception of God, which consequently somehow prompted him to construct the articles of faith in Judaism. The most apparent Almohad influence was in Maimonides' evaluation of anthropomorphism as incompatible with monotheism. Rejecting anthropomorphism was not rare among Muslims, as Islamic principles had laid a clear-cut rule against idolatry. Nevertheless, the Almohad had apparently advocated this objection through enforcing and declaring it as an article of faith that separates believers from heretics.¹⁴⁴ On a similar note, Maimonides was not the first to reject anthropomorphism, but he was the one who took charge in outlining the articles of faith for the Jewish society. As mentioned in *The Guide*,

“The negation of the doctrine of the corporeality of God and the denial of His having a likeness to created things and of His being subject to affections are matters that ought to be made clear and explained to everyone according to his capacity, and ought to be inculcated in virtue of traditional authority upon children, women, stupid ones and those of defective natural disposition, just as they adopt the notion that God is one.”¹⁴⁵

It was obvious that much like the Almohads, Maimonides advocated true monotheism, which stresses the non-corporeality of God. Although it was mentioned above that the non-corporeal message extends to all community levels despite being mentioned in the *Guide* that is aimed towards an elite audience. Nevertheless, the message was included in the 13 articles of faith that distinguish a Jewish believer from a non-believer.

After 20 years of residing under Almohad rule, Maimonides migrated to Fostat and became a Jewish leader (*Raī's al-Yahūd*). During his time in Egypt where he is known to have adopted Ash'arite theology, Maimonides participated in theological

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 70

¹⁴⁵ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 81

discussions with his Muslim counterparts, the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, theological proofs never seemed to entice him in the way philosophical proof did. This is evident in the extent to which the threat of the Karaites toward the Rabbanites decreased through debates with them.¹⁴⁷

In Maimonides' milieu there were generally two groups of Jewish intellectuals: the philosophers and the theologians, or rationalists. The first group was basically influenced by Greek philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Jewish thinkers associated with this group were for instance Maimonides himself and Abraham Ibn Daud (1110-1180). The group of rationalists from the Mu'tazilite sect, which was closer to Islam, included for instance Saadia Gaon (822-942) and al-Mukammis (d.937).¹⁴⁸

The Jewish *Kalām* first began to surface in the ninth century along with the influence of Muslim and Christian theology.¹⁴⁹ The Jewish *Kalām* emerged due to the influence of the Mu'tazilite theology, which was adhered by the Karaite¹⁵⁰ Jews. Among Jewish philosophers who were partially influenced by Mu'tazilite theology were Marwan al-Muqammis (d.937), Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Kirkisani and Saadiah ben Joseph Gaon (822-942). Maimonides explained the factor of Mu'tazilite influence among the early Karaites:

¹⁴⁶ Sarah Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 17

¹⁴⁷ Maimonides was depicted as having ongoing discussions with the Gaon of Baghdad, Samuel ben 'Eli on the resurrection of the dead. Although Maimonides did indeed include the resurrection of the dead in the 13 articles of faith, he nevertheless denied the resurrection of the body and perceived resurrection to be merely a metaphor. This is opposed to the Gaon belief in the resurrection of both body and soul. Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 166

¹⁴⁸ Sirat. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. 13

¹⁴⁹ Direct contact between Jewish scholars such as Muqammas with Christian theologians is obvious in the 9th century, when Muqammas who studied under the guidance of his Christian teacher in Nisbis for many years may have very much been influenced by Christian theology. Simultaneously, Muqammas' Islamic influences can be seen through his exposure to Aristotelian philosophical material, which is mainly written in Arabic form. Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 34. See also M. Cook, "The Origins of Kalam" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 43 (1980), 32-43

¹⁵⁰ A Jewish sect who denies the genuineness of Oral Torah as the sayings and discussions of the Rabbinate (religious scholars of the Jews)

“In certain things our scholars followed the theory and the method of these Mu’tazilah. Although another sect, the Asha’irah, with their own peculiar views, was subsequently established amongst the Mohammedans, you will not find any of these views in the writings of our authors; not because these authors preferred the opinions of the first-named sect to those of the latter, but because they chanced first to become acquainted with the theory of Mu’tazilah, which they adopted and treated as demonstrated truth”¹⁵¹

Here, Maimonides claimed that the Mu’tazilite’s influence was not through their endeavour but occurred coincidentally due to its earlier emergence than the Ash‘arite . The argument taken from the Mu’tazilite shows their commonality in agreeing with the simple concept of unity. Although Judaism has externally been known for its monotheistic stance, it remains ambiguous internally. Although Maimonides claimed that the Jewish *Kalām* is only indebted to the Muslim *Kalām*, it remains questionable.¹⁵² Whether Maimonides was not aware of the direct contact between Jews and Christians or if he perhaps semiconsciously intended to present the Jewish *Kalām* as having imitated the Muslim *Kalām* remains vague.¹⁵³

Medieval Jewish philosophy only emerged in the early tenth century as part of the intercultural assimilation with the Muslim community in the Islamic East, which extended to Muslims in the West, such as North Africa, Spain and Egypt. The Jews had anticipated the golden era of the Muslim community through the use of the Arabic language as a means of communication.¹⁵⁴ It is not that the Jews did not produce rich

¹⁵¹ Moses Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. M. Friedlander (ed). (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 108

¹⁵² This matter is still disputable. Christian influence on the development of Jewish kalam is also apparent especially towards al-Muqammas (in the ninth century) as well as the later generations of Saadia and Qirqisani. Stroumsa. *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*. 34

¹⁵³ This may be due to his unfavorable stand towards *kalam* why he did not take the discussion to greater lengths.

¹⁵⁴ A comprehensive account of this long-lasting phenomenon is described by Alnoor¹⁵⁴:

Most of this translation activity was performed in Spain, especially in Toledo, where Jews, Christians and Muslims lived side by side, and also in Sicily. Some translators were Jews who translated Arabic works into Hebrew, or collaborated with others to translate Hebrew works into Latin. The family of Judah ibn Tibbon, based in Languedoc in southern France, is famous for the translation into Hebrew of several works by Jews who had written in Arabic, including Saadiah Gaon (d. 942 CE), Judah Halevi (d. 1141 CE), Solomon ibn Gabirol (d. 1058 CE) and Moses Maimonides (d. 1204 CE), as well as

literature on biblical and rabbinic subjects, but there were no extensive writings on purely scientific and philosophical topics. Most writings were only available in Arabic and therefore, only by knowing Arabic could they access philosophical writings. The reason was clearly to investigate relations between Jewish tradition and philosophical thought.¹⁵⁵

Medieval Jewish philosophy has contributed not only to Jewish thought but also as an intermediary between Islamic philosophy, Greek philosophy and the Christian world. The reciprocal complement between both religion and philosophy was adopted by Maimonides. He negated the contradiction between philosophy and revelation and instead proposed that the revealed texts allude and lead to their connection.¹⁵⁶

In addition, Jewish medieval philosophy also served as the fundamental rule of Jewish thought as a whole in its rationalistic form of representing the truth. Theological realism however, was decisively discussed by Maimonides who attempted to reinterpret the Law in his naturalistic understanding of the relation between God and the universe.¹⁵⁷ Jewish medieval philosophy was clearly expounded by Maimonides as a legal thinker who successfully embraced a balance between philosophy and religion. Although his effort to import philosophical ideas into Judaism was not fully accepted by the Jewish community, the representation certainly affected the development of

several philosophical works by Ibn Rushd. Other translators were Christian, including Constantine the African (flourished 1065-1085 CE), Adelard of Bath (flourished 1116-1142 CE), Robert of Chester (flourished 1141-1150 CE), Gerard of Cremona (circa 1114-1187 CE) and others. Translations were made not only of originally Greek works that had been translated into Arabic (for example, Euclid's *Elements*, Ptolemy's *Almagest* and the Aristotelian corpus), but also of works by Islamic scientists and philosophers. The latter were known through their Latinized names of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Avempace (Ibn Bajja), Abubacer (Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl), Algazel (al-Ghazālī), Alhazen (al-Hasan Ibn al-Haytham), Rhazes (al-Rāzī), Haly Abbas ('Ali ibn al-'Abbas al-Majusi) and so on. See Alnoor Dhanani, "The Muslim Philosophy and Science," in *The Muslim Almanac*, (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Inc, 1996) 189 – 204.

¹⁵⁵ Hyman, Arthur. "Jewish Philosophy in the Islamic World" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr & Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*. Vol 1. (London & New York: Routledge, 1996) 677-678

¹⁵⁶ Sirat. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. 4

¹⁵⁷ Leaman, Oliver. "Introduction to the Study of Medieval Jewish Philosophy," In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Daniel H. Frank & Oliver Leaman (eds). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6-7

culture in public and intellectual life. Thus, medieval philosophy was an era of reconciling philosophy and the Scriptures.

Thus, Maimonides' background under three different rulings, the Almoravid, the Almohad and the Ayyubid, obviously infused diverse thinking into his intellectual journey. The Almoravid enabled him to embrace multiculturalism. Meanwhile, the Almohad taught Maimonides to establish a sturdy faith within Judaism. As for the later period of his life, Maimonides focused on transcribing what he believed, which can be read in his two magnum opus *Mishnah Torah* and *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Apart from that, Maimonides' intellectual journey, of which no scholar could escape reading its Arab translations of Greek works, indeed extensively influenced Maimonides. As a result, Maimonides found truth in Aristotle's works, consequently adopting Aristotle's method of deliberating the Torah and understanding God.

2.2.3 Maimonides' Theological Stance

In describing the propositions of the *Kalām*, Maimonides only intended to demonstrate their inadequacy in the arguments on the existence of God and His unity. According to Maimonides, their propositions were merely "imagination and thought that the theologians were following as dictates of the intellect."¹⁵⁸ This is because some of the propositions advocated by the theologians had already demonstrated its falseness, such as the existence of atoms and vacuum.¹⁵⁹ According to Maimonides,

"Nor must you expect that I should repeat the arguments of the Mutakallemin in support of their propositions, with which they wasted their time...Their propositions, with few exceptions, are contradicted by the visible properties of things and beset with numerous objections"¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed* 108

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 109

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 112

Looking back at the origin of *kalām* including the Muslim theologians, Maimonides enumerated an account of the theologians who only followed the learned among Syrians and Greeks, who opposed philosophical opinions. In Maimonides' view, this all started within the Christian community who rejected philosophical propositions being instilled within Christian dogmas. Thus, *Kalām* seems to emerge only in the name of defending the creeds. Maimonides added that the theologians only considered useful propositions in parallel to their law and that refute others. There were also those with opinions closer to philosophers and opposed to theologians, such as Ibn Rushd, whom Maimonides called 'Andalusian Scholars.'¹⁶¹

Another reason why Maimonides simply could not accept *Kalām* and preferred philosophical ways is the *Kalām* methodology of demonstrating a theory. The theologians established their premises based on the absolute will of God. In contradistinction, the philosophers adopted what is manifested to the senses. Maimonides agreed with the theologians in employing scriptural verses as proof, as Rabbis do with Biblical verses. Nevertheless, he found the proofs to be insufficient in demonstrating logical truth.¹⁶²

Although Maimonides refuted the Muslim *Kalām*, he nevertheless seemed to most often apply dialectical methods over the syllogistic form of the philosophers. It can be seen that Maimonides did very little empirical investigation on his own but instead relied heavily on observing Aristotle. Maimonides' skill in philosophy is

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 109

¹⁶² *Ibid*, I 71, 73. The *Kalām* proves God is incorporeal and one, by proving that the world was created. On the other hand, the philosophers attempted to prove that God is one and incorporeal through the assumption of an eternal world. To Maimonides, both methods are defective. Thus, Maimonides in a way attempted to establish an argument from both premises and established a synthesis of both. Phines, Shlomo. "How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed" in *The The Guide of the Perplexed*. li.

nonetheless apparent in his way of presenting arguments logically.¹⁶³ Thus, it can be said that Maimonides had perhaps a lot in common with Muslim theologians themselves and was yet determined to oppose them. His work may not be as heavily philosophical as he wanted.

Although in the introduction he did not directly begin the discussion on philosophy, Maimonides affirmed his stance through exposing the *Kalām* tenets and later refuting their arguments with philosophical proof. His devotion to explaining biblical terms in the first chapter of the *Guide* did, however, show his dedication to the Law as his fundamental conviction.¹⁶⁴ In general, Maimonides was recognized as a philosopher -- an Aristotelian philosopher, as he himself associated himself with the Aristotelian thought. He held Aristotle in the highest esteem as mentioned in his letter to his translator Samuel ibn Tibbon:

“The writings of Aristotle’s teacher Plato are in parables and hard to understand. One can dispense with them, for the writings of Aristotle suffice and we need not occupy [our attention] with the writings of earlier [philosophers]. Aristotle’s intellect [represents] the extreme of human intellect.”¹⁶⁵

This is apparent in Maimonides’ communication with his disciple Joseph Ibn Shim’on (d.1226) and Samuel Ibn Tibbon (d.1230). In a letter to Ibn Tibbon, he compelled them to read Aristotle along with his authoritative commentators such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius (d. 387) or Ibn Rushd (d.1198).¹⁶⁶ Although not a single teacher from whom Maimonides learned his philosophy is mentioned, it is possible he learned it on his own.

¹⁶³ Ivry, Alfred. ‘Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed’ in *The Classics of Western Philosophy: A Reader’s Guide*. Eds Jorge Garcia et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 129

¹⁶⁴ Ivry. *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*. 71

¹⁶⁵ Marx, Alexandre. “Texts by and about Maimonides: The Unpublished Translation of Maimonides’ Letter to Ibn Tibbon” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, (1934) 25: 374-381.

¹⁶⁶ Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*, 14. This is particularly mentioned in his letter to Ibn Tibbon. See Marx, “Text by and About Maimonides,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*. 374-381.

It is widely known that the Guide contested the theological arguments of the theologians. Maimonides instead indulged in Aristotelian and Neo Platonic philosophies. Maimonides' apophatic theology¹⁶⁷ (negative theology) appears similar to what the Isma'ili offered during the Fatimid rule. His extreme formulation was deeply influenced by Neoplatonic writings. However, the Isma'ili influence is obvious in the terminology used by an Isma'ili philosopher Hamid-ad-Din al-Kirmani. Maimonides' statement affirming the positive knowledge achieved through negative apprehension resembles al-Kirmani's "affirmation by the method of negation."¹⁶⁸

Moreover, his critical debate on cosmology somehow resonates the theologians in concluding a created universe. This, however, he demonstrated differently through philosophical argument that he borrowed from Aristotle. This was represented through resonating Platonic and Aristotelian ideas that regard human beings as having a rational nature and being realized in intellectual perfection. The Scriptures and traditions are guides for attaining perfection. Maimonides' emphasis on philosophical arguments is obvious through his statement where he claimed it as "generally admitted." In another instance, Maimonides claimed that "one of the foundations of our Law" is to affirm that "He is the intellect as well as the intellectually cognizing subject and the intellectually cognized object, and that those three notions form in Him, may He be Exalted, one single notion in which there is no multiplicity."¹⁶⁹

Although this is rejected by traditionalist Jews, it is undeniable that his philosophical

¹⁶⁷ One of the methods of knowing God is negation, which is also known as negative theology. This is also related to mystical experience. Man cannot understand God in a total form, as man can only understand God as much as God has revealed. This is subject to insight from negative theology. The source is an anonymous author known as Dionysius introduced in the late fifth century among the Christians, especially within Christian mysticism. Reese, William. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*. (USA: The Harvester Press Ltd. 1980), Entry: Pseudo Dionysius. 466. The basic premise of negative theology is to gain understanding and experience of what God is not, which is believed to be the closest to the nature of God.

¹⁶⁸ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 83-87. See Pines. "Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in the Kuzari" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2, 165-251. See also Kremer, Joel, 'Moses Maimonides: An Intellectual Portrait' in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*.

¹⁶⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 100

works had a profound impact on non-Jewish philosophers such as Aquinas and Leibniz.

Maimonides' work drew some controversial responses, especially concerning his attempt at integrating philosophy within the Judaic law. This does not mean Maimonides rejected tradition, but rather that Maimonides understood the truth with articulation of its rationality. Maimonides saw philosophy as something imbued within religion. He claimed with his metaphor of the esotericism of religion that it is similar to 'apples of gold in settings of silver.' Maimonides attempted to demonstrate the ways in which philosophical depth and truth are present in Jewish thought and tradition. According to Maimonides, revelation is construed from esoteric and exoteric views, which is clear in the figurative verses about God in the Bible. Maimonides delineated the verses twofold. Each verse denotes different underlying meanings, as the truth lies beneath what is written as is the case with anthropomorphism, which Maimonides argued that it refers to an eternal and incorporeal God. As another instance, the 'account of the beginning' and the 'account of the chariot' contain truths of the natural world and metaphysics, respectively.

The truth in these accounts can be apprehended through a profound thinking and learning process. This leads to Maimonides' central philosophical thought on the Divine, whereby he viewed God as an 'active intellect.' God is the supreme intellect from which His wisdom inheres and overflows to other intellects. Only intellects that are equipped with moral and wisdom will arrive to the highest intellect, God. Nevertheless, Maimonides did not deny the limitation of reason, which is translated in his negative theology. Following Aristotle's theory, Maimonides also argued that the perfection of the human intellect is the prerequisite of prophecy besides selection by God Himself. This entails the notion of a prophet as a 'philosopher-king.'

The commandments in relation to human nature guide humans in the direction of increasingly rational religion that leads to intellectual cognition, which is to Maimonides true prophecy as well as metaphysics. In the *Guide*, Maimonides' thesis is in arguing the distinction between esoteric and exoteric teachings of the Bible to the extent that he was understood as naturalistic Aristotelian and on the other hand a Jewish scholar who attempted to harmonise religion with philosophy.¹⁷⁰

Maimonides' inclination towards philosophy can be seen in several instances. Among his claims were 'generally admitted' by the philosophers. He also claimed philosophy is 'one of the foundations of our law.' Meanwhile, the central concept of God that he proposed in *The Guide*, which affirms 'God as the intellect as well as the intellectually cognizing subject and the intellectually cognized object' and those three notions form in Him, one single notion in which there is no multiplicity certainly indicates Maimonides' strong anticipation towards philosophical demonstration.

To Maimonides, whether the world was created or not was beyond the limit of the human intellect. Maimonides mentioned "God rules the universe and provides for it, is a complete mystery; man is unable to solve it."¹⁷¹ In another account, he mentioned that "man's faculties are too deficient to comprehend, even the general proof that the heavens contain the existence of Him who sets them in motion."¹⁷² This can be observed in his claim that there is a limit to our intellect.

If you admit the doubt and do not persuade yourself to believe that there is a proof for things which cannot be demonstrated, or try at once to reject and positively to deny an assertion the opposite of which has never been proven, or attempt to perceive things which are beyond your perception, then you have attained the highest degree of human perfection...If, on the other hand, you attempt to exceed the limit of your intellectual power or at once to reject things as impossible which have never been proven to be impossible, or which are in fact possible

¹⁷⁰ For instance, as a naturalistic Aristotelian, Maimonides believed in the eternity of the universe. Whereas as an observant Jew, he believed in the Divine creation and will.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 119.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 198.

though their possibility be very remote, you will not only fail to become perfect but you will become exceedingly imperfect.¹⁷³

This proves Maimonides' limitation in metaphysics. Maimonides warned of the danger of delving into metaphysics in the early stages of a learning journey due to the confusion that will face those who indulge in this field.

In sum, Maimonides refuted *Kalām*, and propositions established by the theologians were futile to him in his critics against their proofs of God's existence and unity. In contrary, Maimonides opined that philosophical propositions were the best in proving God's existence, unity and His incorporeality. It is observed that Maimonides integrated Aristotelian and Platonic philosophical thought in his writings. This indicates his influence with Islamic philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā and is especially obvious in his notion of emanation and active intellect of God.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

In sum, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides fully embraced Islamic scholarship in establishing their understanding and propositions pertaining to the concept of God. Al-Ghazālī is perceived to have refuted philosophers, while Maimonides refuted *Kalām* propositions and succeeded Aristotelian philosophy following the footsteps of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Their background certainly influenced their stance on philosophy and *kalām*. Al-Ghazālī lived among the Shiite and Mu'tazilite, most of whose doctrines he rebutted in his writings. Not only that, but al-Ghazālī also refuted mostly Muslim philosophers who imitated the Greeks, such as Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī and who were, in contrast, championed by Maimonides. The Islamic influence is more clearly traced in Maimonides' writings than the Jewish influence in his elaboration of God's

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 42

existence, attributes and actions. Thus, Islamic scholarship certainly served as a background environment for both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides on certain common matters.

Both were rationalists in accepting the authority of reason to understand and rectify revelation. However, al-Ghazālī placed revelation above reason, as he claimed there are ways in which reason cannot surpass revelation. For instance, the appointment of prophets, according to al-Ghazālī, is as God wills. However, Maimonides' reification of al-Fārābī's intellectual perfection cordoned that prophecy is the result of a prophet's intellectual perfection, thus discrediting God's power above everything.

Maimonides attempted to explore philosophical proofs within the revelation. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī only applied reason to understanding the revelation. These two approaches completely differ. The former places reason vis-a-vis revelation, whereas the latter only claims reason is one of the tools in accepting revelation. The implication of the former is that whatever revelations contradict reason will be rejected or reinterpreted. As for al-Ghazālī, there are things that reason cannot perceive and must be halted. Accepting revelations as they were delivered is obligatory. It is not that he denied *ta'wīl* for instance, but al-Ghazālī's approach was to first accept revelation before delving into questioning its relevance. It is certainly not wrong to rationalize the revelation, but there are limits to doing so. For instance, in the case of anthropomorphism, al-Ghazālī opposed embracing a figurative form of God. Nevertheless, he assured that Muslims are to accept the verses, unlike the Mu'tazilite who absolutely refuted the verses. Meanwhile, Maimonides believed that revelation comes with an esoteric interpretation, which he believed was philosophy. Nonetheless, not every Jew needs to learn esoteric meanings. However, he believed philosophy has already been imbued within the revelation and therefore only men with high

intellectual capacity can attain its esoteric meanings. This is partly the reason he emphasized intellectual and moral perfection so much.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 3

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZĀLĪ AND MAIMONIDES

3.0 Introduction

The problem of atheism or agnosticism did not arise in medieval times or at least not in the philosophical discourse then. It was equally agreed among Muslim and Jewish scholars during that period that God exists. However, the question of how God exists and what kind of existence He possesses has become the central dispute in philosophers' arguments.

There are generally two approaches adopted by scholars, which emerge either from the premise of the creation or eternity of the universe. It is apparent that much more is at stake concerning the dispute on the cosmological issue, as it determines the relationship between God and the universe in specifically addressing the question of whether God is either a necessary or voluntary cause.

The argument on God's incorporeality will also be addressed in the second part of this chapter under the discussion on anthropomorphism, which was certainly also widely deliberated in the Middle Ages. Anthropomorphism is discussed in this chapter and not in the subsequent chapters due to the nature of discussion on God's essence. Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides emphasized God's incorporeality, albeit with differed arguments. The second part of this chapter will discuss how al-Ghazālī and Maimonides addressed anthropomorphic verses and the implications of following literal meaning.

3.1 The Existence of God According to al-Ghazālī

In proving the existence of God, philosophers and theologians have proposed several different arguments. Among the more well-known is the argument that the existence of the universe entails the existence of its creator. This cosmological discussion has achieved the greatest position in philosophical arguments. It is basically due to the philosophers' continuous debate on ontological arguments of universals and particulars, essence and existence, and substance and accidents in determining the existence of God and His relation to the universe. The eternity of the universe, for instance, has largely been claimed by several medieval philosophers known as Aristotelians. Muslim philosophers were not exceptionally devoid from the influence of Greek traditions.¹⁷⁴ They were then known as peripatetic scholars, or *masysshaiyyah*, who were deeply influenced by Greeks. Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rusyd are among the better-known Muslim philosophers.

3.1.1 Proofs of God's Existence

It is clear that al-Ghazālī affirmed God is the cause behind creating existence from non-existence. He first argued that all existence other than Allah involves bodies and accidents to originate. This is demonstrated through al-Ghazālī's classification of existence into four different categories. Existence must be either extended (*mutahayyiz*) or non-extended (*ghayr mutahayyiz*). Extended existence can be divisible (*mutahayyiz wa i'tilaf*) or non-divisible (*mutahayyiz wa ghayr i'tilaf*). Non-extended

¹⁷⁴ During the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun, a door opened for the translation of Greek philosophy into the Islamic corpus of knowledge. The enthusiasm to learn Greek philosophy opened up horizons of blind acceptance and extreme usage of rationale over revelation.

existence can be with bodies (*ghayr mutahayyiz bi al-jism*) and without bodies (*ghayr mutahayyiz bidun al-jism*).

The first two categories apply to extended (*mutahayyiz*) existence, which requires space. First, existence that occupies space (*mutahayyiz*) and that can be divisible (*i'tilaf*) certainly constitutes a body and is known as a body (*jism*). Secondly, if there is no combination in it or in other terms, non-divisible (*ghayr i'tilaf*) is known as a single substance (*jawhar fard*) such as *nafs* and *'aql*. Both require space but are a single substance that does not constitute different parts. Unlike the first, a body constitutes different parts, such as our physical body consisting of multiple limbs.¹⁷⁵

The last two categories refer to non-extended existence (*ghayr mutahayyiz*), which does not require space to exist. First, non-extended existence that requires bodies for it to exist is known as accident.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, the last category denotes non-extended existence that requires neither space nor body to exist and refers to God, Allah.¹⁷⁷

From his categorization of existence, it is observed that al-Ghazālī clearly separated God's existence from other existence, for His existence is neither a substance nor a body and certainly not an accident. Body and substance according to al-Ghazālī can be perceived with the senses. This is not the case with God's existence, as it can only be perceived by proof and not perception. God's existence can only be known through the existence of the universe as a product of His power. This leads to

¹⁷⁵ According to Jurjani in his *Ta'rifat*, substance (*jawhar*) is of five different types, whether abstract or non-abstract. Abstract substance is such as the mind and soul, whereas non-abstract substance is such as body, form and matter.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Ghazālī shunned sophists who disagreed with the theory of accidents, as they claimed that knowledge may or may not exist. Accidents are mere possibilities that may or may not exist.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisad fi al-'Itiqad*, 91

al-Ghazālī's fundamental premise that all existents other than God (bodies or accidents) are temporal, and every temporal being has a cause.¹⁷⁸

In explicating the nature of God's existence, al-Ghazālī highlighted God's necessary existence, which is through His essence and not dependent on other existence. God is eternal, (*qadim*) impossible to cease and also sempiternal (*azali*).¹⁷⁹ Al-Ghazālī underlined that other things besides God are considered possible existents. Only God is the sole, necessary existent. In his *Ma'arij al-Quds*, al-Ghazālī explained eight important aspects of necessary existence: 1) it must not be associated with accidents, as it is related to bodily figures; 2) it must not possess a physical body, as it is related to numbers, matter (*maddah*) and forms; 3) it must not possess a form or shape, as both are related to materials; 4) God's existence is His quiddity (*mahiyyah*); 5) God must not be related to others in His existence that entails a causal existence; 6) God must not be related to others in a form of accommodation that leads to possible existence; 7) it is impossible to possess two necessary existences, likewise it is impossible for one body to possess two souls; and 8) every other object besides necessary existents must be dependent on this existence.¹⁸⁰

Although he incorporated some points made by Ibn Sīnā, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī's version of necessary existence differs from Ibn Sīnā's in three

¹⁷⁸ Prior to al-Ghazālī, there were some *Kalam* scholars who upheld the first argument that a thing is either temporal or eternal, or more comprehensively, either "whichever that is inescapable from possessing the genes of the universe" (*la yakhlū 'an jins al-'alam*) or "freed from it" (*kharijan 'anh*).

¹⁷⁹ There is a slight difference between eternal and pre-eternal. Eternal is more specific than sempiternal, as eternity refers to existence that has no beginning while sempiternity infers existence that has no beginning of non-existence. Eternity is employed more specifically for God and His attributes. On the other hand, sempiternal also refers to no beginning of something that does not exist. It is impossible to refer to the non-existence of God. Thus, Azalī further affirmed there is no beginning for non-existence, such as humans. Initially, man did not exist and the non-existence ended upon man's creation. Hence, the beginning for non-existence is not even categorized under *azalī*, let alone *qidam*. See Al-Zabidi. *Ithaf al-Sadah al-Muttaqin bi Syarh Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. 157. See also Al-Bājūrī, Ibrahim al- Bājūrī bin Muhammad al-Jizawi bin Ahmad. *Tuḥfah al-Murid 'ala Jawharah al-Tauhid*. 198 Al-Ghazālī, *Ma'arij al-Quds fi Madarij Ma'rifah al-Nafs*, (Cairo: Matba'ah al-Istiqaamah), 141-142. See also Sulaiman Dunya. *Al-Haqiqah fi Nazr al-Ghazālī*. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif), 177-178. Al-Ghazālī's argument on necessary existence somehow resembles Ibn Sīnā's theory of necessary existence as reiterated in his *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah*. Al-Ghazālī, *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah*. (Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008), 107-110.

aspects. Firstly, al-Ghazālī denied any necessary causal relation. Secondly, in al-Ghazālī's view, God's attributes do not signify a multiplicity of essence.¹⁸¹ Thirdly, they differ in terms of *surah* and *hayula*, whose positions Ibn Sīnā affirmed in every material body, whereas al-Ghazālī denied the notion of potential and actual in every form that realizes existence. This is because every existence requires an external force to realize it. It can be deduced that according to al-Ghazālī, God must not be associated with any directions, forms, places, movements or related accidents. It is impossible to relate God to any substance that consists of accidents, quantity and quality or even inseparable bodies.

It can be deduced that the existence of God was explicated by al-Ghazālī in two ways. One way is to ponder upon God's creation, which can be perceived through senses or through the proofs stated in Qur'anic verses.¹⁸² The second way is through dialectical argumentations of the created universe, whereby his proposition consists of two *muqaddimah* and as a result, 1) the universe is contingent, and 2) every contingent has a cause (*sabab*). Therefore, the result is if the universe possesses a cause, it is Allah.

In sum, the existence of God must be emphasized as eternal existence with no beginning and no end. It is essential to differentiate between the created, and temporal and eternal. The proof presented by al-Ghazālī is that if God originated and is not eternal, He would require an originator Himself. Subsequently, His originator would need another originator and so on, to infinity. And that which goes on endlessly will

¹⁸¹ In Ibn Sīnā's requirements of *Wajib al-Wujud*, he denied the existence of attributes. In relation to that, he also delineated quiddity from God's essence, as associating God with quiddity would eventually lead one to subsisting accidents to Him. Therefore, God must be conceived as a simple being who is free from any accidents such as attributes and quiddity. Al-Ghazālī, *Ma'arif al-Quds fī Madarij Ma'rifah al-Nafs*. See also Sulaiman Dunya. *Al-Haqiqah fī Nazr al-Ghazālī*.

¹⁸² Among the Qur'anic verses that prove God's creation of the universe are: Ibrāhīm 14: 32, al-Nahl 16: 14, al-Hajj 22: 65, Luqmān 31: 29, al-Jāthiyah 45: 13, al-Baqarah 2: 164, al-Rūm 30: 22-23, al-Ghāshiyah 88: 17-26

never reach an eternal One who is the first cause. Therefore, the existence of a creator of the universe is absolutely necessary.

3.1.2 The Cosmological Argument

With regards to the arguments on God's existence, al-Ghazālī also presented a fundamental premise of cosmology. This topic was raised intertwiningly with the argument of God's existence in the Middle Ages, as the peripatetic philosophers often related God's existence as being parallel with the universe. In contrary, al-Ghazālī strongly refuted the co-existence of God with the universe and affirmed the universe is God's creation.

According to al-Ghazālī, every temporal being has a cause for its existence, the universe is temporal and it therefore has a cause. Universe here refers to every existence other than God, including bodies and accidents.¹⁸³

This is also mentioned in *Iḥyā'* as follows: 1) the universe is temporal, and 2) for every temporal being there is a cause. Therefore, the universe possesses a cause.¹⁸⁴ Al-Ghazālī affirmed that created beings, which possess a beginning must have begun at a certain definite time. Subsequently, in positing what precedes and succeeds a definite time certainly requires a determinant to select the time for its appearance. In his *Iqtisād*, al-Ghazālī verified this proof through a dialectical method, against the philosophers and Mu'tazilite.¹⁸⁵

Similarly, in his *Tahafut*, al-Ghazālī proposed some premises as follows: 1) there are temporal events in the world; 2) temporal events have causes; and 3) series of

¹⁸³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 91

¹⁸⁴ The argument can also be found in his *Iḥyā'*, 163

¹⁸⁵ In verifying his proposition, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī was aware of what his opponents might rebut. His mastery in peripatetic philosophy is undeniable. This is proven through his iteration of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy in *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah*. Hence, every single argument that was presented is followed by the forthcoming argument of the rationalist.

temporal events cannot regress infinitely. Therefore, the series of creation must cease at the eternal being.¹⁸⁶ This argument clearly highlights the dependency of a temporal existence of God. According to al-Ghazālī, one has to fully embrace this proof without any doubt since it is *priori* and necessary according to reason. Also, one who does not agree perhaps does not clearly understand the meaning of temporal and cause.

Three terms applied by al-Ghazālī intertwiningly in his argument of God's existence are '*alam* (other substance besides God), *hadits* (occurrence) and *sabab* (cause). His precise definition of the three terms is fundamental to his argument. For instance, al-Ghazālī reiterated Ibn Sīnā's definition of '*alam* as a cluster of existences in time and place or a group of natural physical elements comprising the earth and the sky. Al-Ghazālī included both general and specific meanings of the universe, which result in the conclusion that '*alam* refers to other existences besides Allah. *Hadith* is to define that God is the opposite of contingent, which is eternal in a sense and His existence is a necessary existence. This is taken from Ibn Sīnā's proposal of the nature of God as a necessary existent in contrary to the universe as a contingent existent. Thus, *hadith* definitely contradicts the nature of God as a necessary existent and proves that the universe is contingent.¹⁸⁷ Whereas, *sabab* has been the focal distinguishing factor between al-Ghazālī's argument and peripatetic philosophers who were influenced by Aristotle's argument of cause and effect, which determines the correlation between God as the Creator and God as the Prime Mover and First Cause.

¹⁸⁶ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi comments that the second premise may be what seems strange, as al-Ghazālī admitted the existence of secondary causation, which he assertively denounces. However, it must be noted that al-Ghazālī was addressing philosophers who believe in the existence of a real cause in the world, and it must be understood as a concession to his opponents. In other words, Hamid explains that al-Ghazālī agreed with temporal phenomena that are preceded by other temporal phenomena. Nevertheless, it does not deny the volition and power of God in its causation. Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Causality*. (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2010), 102

¹⁸⁷ Al-Hubaisyi, Toha al-Dasuqi. *Al-Jānīb al-Ilāhī fī Fikr al-Imām al-Ghazālī: 'Araḍ wa al-Tahlīl*. (Cairo: Dar al-Toba'ah al-Muhammadiyah, 1987), 33-36

Temporality and cause are fundamental in recognizing a contingent. Temporal intends to prove the non-existent before it becomes existent. Thus, its existence can be either impossible (*mahal*) or contingent (*mumkin*). This automatically disqualifies such thing from being necessarily existent and thus requires a preponderance to incur change from non-existent to existent. Hence, the cause is preponderance.

In short, it can be observed that al-Gazali's argument on the contingencies and temporalities of the universe strongly demonstrated that God cannot co-exist with the universe as claimed by the philosophers. Thus, God's existence must be distinguished from the universe's existence.

3.1.3 Al-Ghazālī on Causality

Al-Ghazālī strongly refuted Ibn Sīnā's theory of necessary existence owing to what is other than itself (*wajib al-wujud li ghairih*), which refers to the necessary causation and existence of an eternal universe.¹⁸⁸ This is due to the philosophers' failure to affirm God's power to create something out of nothing. They believed that a thing cannot exist from the essence of an existing thing. However, it needs an agent to necessitate or give existence to the essence. In order for it to happen, the cause must be an existing thing and coexist with its effect.

The belief of an eternal universe originates from the philosophers' conclusion that the world constitutes eternal matter. According to them and as reiterated by al-

¹⁸⁸ There are basically twelve aspects of *wājib al-wujūd* according to Ibn Sīnā as recorded by al-Ghazālī in his *Maqāsid*. First, it must not contain any accidents. Second, it is not a form of body. Third, it is not a form. Fourth, God's existence and quiddity are similar. Fifth, it is not related to others in the form of cause and effect intertwiningly. Sixth, it is not related to others in terms of cause and effect. The first cause is only related to the effect and the effect does not possess any relation to the cause. Seventh, the necessary existent is only one. There cannot exist two necessary existents. Eighth, the necessary existent must not possess additional attribute unto the essence. Ninth, the necessary existent is not committed to changes as changes demonstrate temporality. Tenth, the necessary existent does not produce multiple forms except one without any mediator. Eleventh, the necessary existent is a substance not related to any location or space. Lastly, everything besides the necessary existent exists through the existence of the first cause. See Al-Ghazālī, *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah*. 107-111.

Ghazālī, the world is divided into the heavens, which move constantly and the units of whose movements are occurrences or temporal but are perpetual and sequential following each other eternally, both anteriorly (*azalan*) and posteriorly (*abadan*). Besides, the philosophers also agreed that these elements share matter, which is the bearer of their forms and accidents. Most importantly, they believed that particular matter is eternal despite the temporality of accidents and forms.¹⁸⁹

Consequently, al-Ghazālī in his *Tahāfut* rigorously refuted the eternity of the universe and denounced Muslim philosophers who believed in an eternal universe.¹⁹⁰ Their argument is a teleological one, an act of causation that relates the existence of God to the universe. It was first established by Plato and Aristotle and further generated by Immanuel Kant and Hegel in modern times. The argument basically emerges from investigating the primary cause of existence.

In demonstrating the existence of God as the sole eternal existent, al-Ghazālī primarily proposed the well-known syllogistic argument to prove the creation of the universe. Al-Ghazālī argued that the origination of the universe required a creator in order to prove the existence of God. The occurrence of the universe was first proven through the occurrence of motion and rest. Each motion and rest were originated, and the associated universe is therefore considered a created being. This argument is articulated in three propositions given in *Ihyā'*.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'Itiqād*, 94

¹⁹⁰ In his *Tahafut*, he refuted 20 problems that had been illuminated by Muslim philosophers, among which three were labeled as *kufṛ*: first, those who believe in the everlasting nature of the universe; second, those who deny God's knowledge of particulars; and third, those who deny the resurrection of the body along with the soul on the Day of Judgment.

¹⁹¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Egypt: al-Maktabah Al-Tawfiqiyyah, 2008), 163

First, bodily figures cannot escape motion and rest. This is apparent through the natural concise (*badīhī*) without the need for serious thinking and pondering (*taa'mmul* and *tafakkur*).¹⁹²

Secondly, both motion and rest are originated phenomena that entail the existence of one after the other. Due to the requirement of the intellect to produce motion and rest, an accident (*al-ṭori'*) originates because of its emergence and its anterior originates because of its extinction. Therefore, it is impossible for eternity to stop existing in motion and rest.¹⁹³

Thirdly, things that cannot escape temporal phenomena, since as mentioned above, they are undoubtedly originated and temporary. The need for a permanent beginning is compulsory or else the originated phenomenon will continue endlessly without a permanent primary essence. Furthermore, if a cycle (*dawrāt*) of the universe occurred, it could not escape from being associated with odd (*witr*) or even (*syafa'*) numbers. Both are impossible to combine in one position, as affirmation (*ithbāt*) and negation (*nafy*) cannot be combined. Therefore, an originated phenomenon requires an originator that is free from any temporal essence (*hawādith*).¹⁹⁴

In his *Iqtiṣād*, al-Ghazālī further elaborated the arguments of those who deny the created universe. Al-Ghazālī confronted the argument through defending the dispute on created accidents; he argued that the universe is contingent and created, hence every created being has a cause. As a temporal being only denotes

¹⁹² Motion is the dismissal of a thing from its potentiality to reality, which requires two places. It is different from rest that only require a place. Motion can be categorized into seven parts: a) motion in quantity form, b) motion in quality form such as hot and cold, c) motion in position, a body that moves from one place to another, d) motion of an accident, e) coercive motion such as thrown pebbles, e) voluntary movement such as the movement of an animal of its will, and f) natural motion such as a rock declining on its own. Al-Zabidi. *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqin bi Syarḥ Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. J. 2. 148

¹⁹³ Motion and rest cannot exist together. Motion exists due to the inexistence of rest and vice versa. Likewise, eternal and contingent cannot exist together as it is against logical conscience. Al-Zabidi. *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqin bi Syarḥ Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. 148

¹⁹⁴ The *Iqtiṣād* addresses this further. If an infinite is even, it is not odd because it is short of one. Hence, if one is added, it becomes odd and even if it is odd it is short of one from becoming even. How can an infinite entity possess shortage?

noncompulsory existence, it may possibly exist and not exist. On the other hand, peripatetic scholars affirmed the coexistence of God with the first matter, which later caused other occurrences to exist through endless emanation.

For instance, al-Kindī established the concept of *al-Haqq*, who ‘does not move but in fact causes motion without moving Himself.’ He successfully maintained the truth by approving God’s power as the true cause of everything, while the causation of natural events is metaphorical. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the Aristotelian doctrine of causality that takes place in every existence and which degrades the role of God and reduces His power to being equal to others.¹⁹⁵

Meanwhile, al-Fārābī was greatly influenced by ‘*illah* and *ma’lūl*’ through his exposition of the emanation theory. It entails God to be the First Cause or *al-Sabab al-Awwal* and the secondary cause comprises the ten intellects along with the nine spheres. The link between heaven and earth is the active intellect who is God. It is deduced that God does not appear to have direct power over His creation, for if God had the attribute of action it would risk His absolute unity.¹⁹⁶ This is derived from the principle of *al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* that says when there exists an existent without a beginning, it is necessary for other existences to exist without man’s will and choice.¹⁹⁷

Ibn Sīnā introduced a different metaphysical framework deduced from the physical science formula that slightly differs from Aristotelian work. Ibn Sīnā was more inclined towards the neo-Platonic emanative theory than the Aristotelian. His emanative theory was further expanded by initiating the eternal universe through God’s eternal act. God’s essence is eternal (*qadīm dhātī*) while His acts and the

¹⁹⁵ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi. *Al-Ghazālī’s Concept of Causality*. 60

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁷ Al-Farabi. *A’rā’ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Masyriq, 1986), 55. See also al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2008), 23

universe are eternal in time (*qadīm zamānī*).¹⁹⁸ Thus, God is considered a necessary existent, whose existence is inherent in other existences through His exposition of preceding causes that are inherent in every cause. This entails the co-existence of cause and effect in time.¹⁹⁹ Although he distinguished between God as the necessary existent and others as ‘necessarily existing by each other,’ he refused God’s superiority above others, as seen in his affirmation of cause as the source of existence.²⁰⁰

Al-Ghazālī defended the premise of a created universe by extensively explaining the occurring universe consisting of bodies and substances. Both are temporal due to their necessary relation to motion and rest.²⁰¹ In contrary to al-Ghazālī’s notion of creation, the peripatetic believes that a chain of necessary causations constituting potentials and actuals is the primary cause of existence. Al-Ghazālī firmly repudiated the emanation theory, as he affirmed God’s power as the intermediate in every creation. This theory proposed the production of a substance through descending power originating from the primary cause. The emanation process obviously disregards God’s power as the sole creator of every substance, as the substance exists out of its own potential and through the necessary causation. This entails belief that the shared matter (*mādah hayūlā*) bearing form and accidents is eternal, although form and accidents are occurrents and alternate anteriorly (*azalan*)

¹⁹⁸ Ibn Sīnā. *Al-Najāt*. (Cairo: Matba’ah al-Sa‘adah, 1938), 251. See also al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, 23

¹⁹⁹ According to his theory of antecedent, there are 5 norms: time, rank or level, nobility, nature and causation. As a whole, an antecedent (*mutaqaddim*) is demanded for its existence in causing the other’s existence without the need of antecedents unto others. The subsequent (*mutaa’kakhir*) differs in terms of its essence. It is the same case for the universe, which is also eternal but is different from God in rank, nature and causation, except for time because the universe preceded God pre-eternally (*azalī*). The universe is considered *qadim zamani*, as it is impossible for a universe to exist later than God in time, it only exists later in essence. Therefore, God becomes its cause and beginning. Insaf Ramadan. *Al-Taḥkīr al-Falsafī al-Islāmiy*. (Beirut: Dar Kotaiba, 2004), 177

²⁰⁰ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi. *Al-Ghazālī’s Concept of Causality*, 60

²⁰¹ Motion and rest are temporal, which met with non-existence before their existence.

and posteriorly (*abadan*).²⁰² As a result, philosophers believed the eternity of the universe as the process of occurrents only occurs due to necessary causation. According to al-Ghazālī, their argument opposed logical reason, which indicates that accidents and forms subsist in matter.

Thus, al-Ghazālī rejected the nature of form and accident acting as potential, which is certainly not free from these seven features: unbinding (*al-infikak*), additional (*zai'd*), hidden (*kamin*), moved (*intiḡal*), subsistent (*qāi'm*), nonexistent is eternal (*qidam 'adam*) and created may possess no beginning (*al-hawadith la awwala laha*).²⁰³

Firstly, al-Ghazālī affirmed that the elements of the sublunar world never cease (*la yanfakk*) to acquire occurrences, as a substance is necessarily not devoid of motion and rest, which are also considered occurrents. Even rest prior to motion is considered an occurrent, since an eternal does not cease to exist. Thus, elements that are not devoid of motion and rest are occurrents and temporal.

Secondly, al-Ghazālī further asserted that occurrences come to rest and become non-existent and therefore cannot be considered eternal. This is because something eternal must exist at any time.

Third, the existence of motion proves that motion is an additional (*zai'd*) element of a substance. Thus, a substance definitely possesses occurrences that are temporal.

Fourth, those who question that accidents are occurrents rather propose that accidents are something hidden in matter. This has been discussed by philosophers

²⁰² The philosophers' argument was extracted from the process of the four elements earth, water, fire and air that mix in various ways producing minerals, plants and animals. These four elements posit within the sublunar world that is commonly employed by the emanative philosophers.

²⁰³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*, 94-100. These seven features are also mentioned and highlighted by al-Bājūrī (d. 1860) in *Jawharah al-Tauhīd*. The discussion is widely known in the later phase of *'Ilm Kalām*'s discourse as *al-Maṭālib al-Sab'ah* (the seven requirements). Al-Bājūrī, Ibrahim al-Bājūrī bin Muhammad al-Jizawi bin Ahmad. *Tuhfah al-Murīd 'ala Jawharah al-Tauhīd*. Tahqiq. Ali Jum'ah. (Cairo: Dar al-Salam, 2008), 88

who adopted the notion of hidden potential within a form, which will only surface when it is moved. This indirectly entails an infinite causal relation. It is also invalid to claim that a potential is matter hidden within in its actual form, for accidents of a preceding thing cannot hide in its previous form. When a thing exists, it exists in its new form and when accident is attached to a substance, it is created by God. It is not something that has already been imbued within its form, for it is impossible to merge existing with hidden just like motion and rest at the same time. Moreover, whether the accident is hidden or surfaced, it is still an occurrent and is not devoid of time.

Fifth, the philosophers arrived at the argument on the transfer (*intiḡal*) of an accident, which is not something new or an occurrence. The philosophers believed that in the process of changing a thing from its potential to actual, the accident that subsists in the matter by natural forces is transferred from potential to actual. Whereas according to al-Ghazālī, if an accident is said to be transferred, it would require a place and additional existence to occur in order to move the accident. The movement of an accident would cause another accident and this could continue infinitely.

Sixth, when an accident is transferred, it requires another accident for it to subsist (*qāi'm*), which would lead to endless subsistence. It is truly important to differentiate between accidents acquiring a place (*maḡāl*) and substances acquiring space (*mutaḡayyiz*).²⁰⁴ Space is not compulsory for substance, but a place or body is essential for an accident. Without a place, an accident could not stand on its own. For instance, Zayd's height is an essential accident of Zayd. His height cannot be imagined without Zayd. Therefore, it is essential to subsist in a body. However, Zayd's space is not essential to him. Even if it is separated from Zayd, space shall still stand on its own.

²⁰⁴ The specification of accident to a place is not something added to the accident. An accident is different from the substance but is related to a body or substance. It requires other accidents or substances to stand upon and is different from a substance that may be perceived as bodiless.

Finally, it is impossible to affirm that occurrences do not possess beginnings. Every occurrence begins, and whichever begins is not eternal and does not transfer but is produced.²⁰⁵ As a whole, this argument rejects the eternity of accidents to essence as claimed by the philosophers. Al-Ghazālī argued that substances other than God are temporal and therefore cannot be considered eternal.

Hence, the universe that was created from bodies and accidents is temporal with the temporality of bodies and accidents. These are the characteristics of motion that demonstrate its createdness and contingency in rebutting philosophers who upheld the eternity of prime matter, which entails the argument of an eternal rotational cycle of the spheres that leads to the eternity of the universe. Subsequently, the theory of potential and actual was rejected. Al-Ghazālī affirmed that it is impossible for a quality to have pre-existed in a substance before existing in its actual form. This is due to the chain of cause and effect, which the peripatetic believed happens by its own nature through the potentiality of form.

Thus, al-Ghazālī primarily argued that there is no causal agency in natural things and all natural events are creations of God.²⁰⁶ It is essential to note that causality designates the meaning of *'illah* and *sabab*. Although both correspond to the meaning of causality, each carries a distinctive implication. In repudiating the peripatetic causality of *'illah* and *ma'lul*, al-Ghazālī advanced *sabab* as the term referring to causality as what is mentioned in the Qur'an.²⁰⁷ The term *'illah* emerged only when Muslim philosophers encountered the Aristotelian tradition.

²⁰⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 164

²⁰⁶ Marmura, Micheal. "Ghazali and Demonstrative Science." *Journal of History and Philosophy* 3, 2. (1965), 183-204

²⁰⁷ For *sabab* see Qur'an, al-Hajj 22:15; al-Kahf 18:84, 85, 89, 92. For *asbāb* see al-Mu'min 40:36-37; al-Baqarah 2: 166; Sād 38:10. It relates to the worldview of Islam through the historical facts of the revelation of *ayat al-kawniyyah* (the verses on creation), which were mostly revealed during the Meccan period of instilling the fundamentals of Islam. There are several Qur'anic verses that express the Divine Causation of God-man and God-nature, which demonstrate God is the Supreme creator possessing limitless power. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi. *Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Causality: With Reference to His*

In criticizing the theory of necessary causation, al-Ghazālī asserts that the verb act necessarily entails the will and knowledge of God. Will is the essence of an action. Without will, action cannot be executed. Apart from that, al-Ghazālī rejected the idea of inanimate beings possessing will. Even if the inanimate is the cause of action, it can only be considered a metaphor (*isti'ārah*). Al-Ghazālī did not deny the occurrence of natural cause and effect. However, it is only a metaphorical cause and effect and God must be considered the true cause of every occurrence.²⁰⁸

3.1.4 The Particularization Argument

The term particularization in al-Ghazālī's *Iqtisād* is referred to as *murajjih*, which is literally defined as preponderant. On the other hand, the term particularization is translated as *mukhaṣṣiṣ*. This term was commonly used by al-Juwaynī in his writing.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, there is no major difference between the two terms, as they imply a similar reference to God's will. In *Iqtisād*, al-Ghazālī first mentioned the subject of particularization in the discussion of creation. He said the universe is contingent and thus requires a preponderant that would change nonexistence to existence.²¹⁰ Here, the preponderant obviously refers to God as the creator of the universe.

Al-Ghazālī further emphasized that God's preponderance determines two opposites that refer to the act of His attribute of will. If God's attribute of power was unlimited to various possibilities, God's will would determine one of the possibilities

Interpretations of Reality and Knowledge. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University of Malaysia, 2010), 28

²⁰⁸ Al-Ghazālī. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 88

²⁰⁹ See Al-Juwaynī. *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā Qawā'ī' al-Adillah fī Usūl al-I'tiqād*. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah) 17

²¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī. *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 92

to occur. His will determines the time and specifications of occurrences.²¹¹ Apart from the relation of God's will to His power, it must also be noted that al-Ghazālī emphasized that God's preponderance is attached to His knowledge. No occurrence can exist outside His knowledge. Thus it can be observed that al-Ghazālī's preponderance refers to the action of God's attribute of will, which is also closely attached to the attributes of power and knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī then categorized four different groups of people with respect to how they understood the relation between the attribute of will and the created universe. The first group entails the philosophers who perceived that the world was brought into existence through the essence of God and there is no attribute additional to His essence. Since His essence is eternal, so is the world. Hence, it can be said that the relation between the world and the divine essence is similar to the relation of effect and its cause.

The second group are the Mu'tazilite who claimed the world is an occurrent that happened through God's occurrent will, which does not possess any space and which necessitated the occurrence of the world.

The third group is the Karamite who maintained that the world occurred through an occurrent will that transpired in God's essence.

Fourth, there were those who claimed the world occurred over time, when the eternal will attached to its occurrence and without changes happening to the eternal will and essence. This was also believed by al-Ghazālī.²¹²

From these categorizations it can be observed that al-Ghazālī strongly emphasized the existence of will and particularization in understanding the creation of the universe. Al-Ghazālī rejected all other claims in which he found errors and

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 168

²¹² *Ibid.* 170

difficulties. For the Mu'tazilite, he found that if the attribute of will does not subsist in God, how does God's will exist? Thus, their claim appears to be incoherent.

On the other hand, the philosophers claimed the universe is eternal and the spheres too are eternal, which would thus lead to regression of eternity. So what is that which necessitates the specifications of the movements of the celestial spheres if there exist regressive eternities? This was the argument made by the philosophers, which eventually entails necessary causation and God being the first cause.

Al-Ghazālī agreed with the philosophers in claiming the universe is a product of God and He is the creator and agent. Nevertheless, he disagreed with their representation of God from three perspectives, namely the agent, act and relation between the two.

According to al-Ghazālī, it is first necessary for the agent to act according to His will prior to the possessed will, the freedom to choose and also knowledge of what He wills. Nevertheless, according to the philosophers, God does not possess will nor attributes. What stems from Him occurs necessarily out of natural effects. Second, the problem lies in their claim of an eternal universe and the occurrence of actions (*qidam al-'ālam wā hudūth al-fi'l*). Third, they claimed that God is one and nothing can be produced out of one except one (*al-wahid la yuṣdar 'anhu illa wahid*). However, the universe is composed of multiple substances. How then is it possible to be a product of one God? As a result, the philosophers opted for the emanation theory and the eternal matter as the source of the creation of the universe and other contingencies.²¹³

²¹³ *Ibid.* 83-89. This argument was mentioned extensively in al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* under problem 3 on the issue of 'The philosophers' dishonesty in saying that God is the agent and the maker of the world, which is His action or product and the explanation of the fact that these words have only a metaphorical and not real significance to them.'

The three arguments above can be seen as the fundamental claims with which al-Ghazālī disagreed to the extent that he claimed apostasy upon those who affirm an eternal God but deny Him as the Particularizing Agent (*al-fā'il al-mukhtār*).²¹⁴

Whereas, in al-Ghazālī's syllogistic argument, he still maintained that God is the Maker who wills (*al-fā'il al-mukhtār*) and creates upon His will. This manifests His supremacy as a God who does not necessarily comply with existence, the laws of nature or the limited human intellect.²¹⁵

Al-Ghazālī observed that the philosophers' mistake in conceiving God as an agent lies within their failure to differentiate between an agent that possesses will and an agent by nature. According to al-Ghazālī, an agent is one from whom an action proceeds because of the will for action and by way of free choice with the knowledge of what is willed. But in the philosophers' view, the world tolerates the same relation to God as an effect to its cause. Thus, God is not capable of avoiding His actions just like man who cannot escape having a shadow.

The philosophers according to al-Ghazālī mistakenly applied wrong words to different contexts. They easily coined two things with respect to an attribute, for instance in claiming that God is the agent of the whole cause while the sun is also the cause of light.

This is in contrary to what al-Ghazālī claimed. He argued that God is an agent or a cause in a special manner who possesses will and free choice. Thus, one cannot induce a stone or the sun to be agents. The terminology is false and will lead to the misconception of God. However, it is also wrong to assume that lifeless matter is not the cause and has no action or relation with an event. Therefore, according to al-

²¹⁴ Ahmad Shams al-Din. *Muqaddimah Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 23

²¹⁵ Al-Ghazālī. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 84

Ghazālī, lifeless matter that causes an event is known as a ‘metaphorical agent’ (*al-fa‘il bi al-isti‘arah*).²¹⁶

Hence, al-Ghazālī clearly distinguished between the terms cause and agent. The term cause may or may not constitute will. The term cause, if subjected to created beings or contingencies, may only refer to a metaphorical cause. For instance, fire does not cause death with will. However, a ‘true’ action or cause is that with which will accompanies the action. Therefore, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī emphasized applying the correct term to God. Although al-Ghazālī saw the philosophers as claiming that God is the agent of the universe and the universe is His product, they failed to understand the reality behind their claim. For this reason their claim remained absurd.

Concluding Remarks

It can be concluded that in his discourse on God’s existence, al-Ghazālī proposed five main arguments. First, al-Ghazālī categorized existence into four aspects and rectified God’s existence as being non-extended, devoid of any body, substance or accidents. Second, al-Ghazālī affirmed that God is a necessary existent. Third, he advocated the premise that everything other than God is occurrent and subject to temporality. Therefore, substances that consist of occurrences cannot be eternal. Fourth, to repudiate the eternity of the universe, al-Ghazālī proposed seven features of accidents to prove that the universe, which comprises matter and accidents, is not eternal. Finally, God’s relation with the universe is evident through His act of creation out of His free will and knowledge. Al-Ghazālī highly emphasized that God is the

²¹⁶ *Ibid*

Particularizing Agent. Things exist through the power of God and not through the necessary existence of natural causes.

It is obvious that the discussion on God's existence is closely related to cosmological matters. Proof of a created universe will certainly prove God's existence as the Creator. Al-Ghazālī firmly opposed the peripatetic philosophers' claim of an 'eternal universe' and proposed a counterargument. His argument mainly starts with logical proof, followed by verification through a dialectical method. His proof consists of the premise that every created being has a reason and therefore the universe is created and requires a reason. Al-Ghazālī went on to explain the regression of substance and accidents that could not be separated from occurrences and temporal substances. This demonstrates that it is not possible for the universe, which consists of substances and accidents, to be eternal as claimed by the philosophers. In addition, al-Ghazālī repudiated the philosophers' extensive arguments on the eternal regression between God and the universe. Al-Ghazālī rigorously disposed of each of their arguments through a demonstrative and dialectical method. In disposing of their arguments of causation, al-Ghazālī advanced his concept of causality by coining the terms *sabab* and *musabbab*, unlike the philosophers who were inclined towards the term '*illah ma'lul*'. Al-Ghazālī finally negated their argument by deeming God as the sole *al-Fa'il al-Mukhtar* (The Particularizing Agent).

3.2 The Existence of God According to Maimonides

The threefold dogma of God was emphasized in the medieval Jewish period as consisting of God's existence, unity and incorporeality. Maimonides considered two

different premises to demonstrate God's existence: the created and eternal universe.²¹⁷

He clearly identified the created world as being essential to understanding God and His existence vis-a-vis the existence of the universe.

3.2.1 Proofs of God's Existence

In the discussion of God's existence, Maimonides reiterated the Avicennian theory of essence and existence. He affirmed that in God's case, essence and existence are identical, as His essence is His existence. God's essence and existence should not be distinguished as He is the only necessary being and His Being cannot be associated with any accidents.²¹⁸ This is different from other creations or the sublunar entity. Existence is an accident attached to essence.²¹⁹ God, on the other hand, must not be ascribed accidents such as attributes. This must be totally rejected as being part of God's essence, as it contains the notion of temporality, whereas God's essence is one and unchanging. As Maimonides mentioned, "It is known that existence is an accident appertaining to all things and therefore an element superadded to their essence."²²⁰ Therefore, Maimonides clearly affirmed God as an absolute existence and essence. As mentioned in *The Guide*,

Accordingly, His existence is identical to His essence and His true reality, and His essence is His existence. Thus, His essence does not have an accident attached to it when it exists, in which case its

²¹⁷ According to Maimonides, to establish proof based on one premise posits one having an unsound stand. He neither denied proof of a created world nor denied its eternity. To him, whether the world is created or not is beyond the limit of the human intellect. For example, Maimonides mentioned "God rules the universe and provides for it is a complete mystery; man is unable to solve it" Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 119. In another account, he mentioned that "man's faculties are too deficient to comprehend even the general proof of heavens containing the existence of Him who sets them in motion." Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 198. This proves Maimonides' limitation in metaphysics.

²¹⁸ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 59

²¹⁹ The issue of the relation between essence and existence has spurred a huge discussion among Muslim philosophers. This can be seen in Avicenna and Averroes' debates on whether God's existence and essence are identical or the other way around, as claimed by Averroes. See Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 44

²²⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 80

existence would be a notion that is superadded to it... consequently He exists, but not through an existence other than His essence.²²¹

Meanwhile, Maimonides also affirmed God's existence in his *Mishneh Torah* with commentary on the following three commandments: (1) "I am the Lord, thy God" (Exod. 20: 2); (2) "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20: 3); and (3) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6: 4). In his comment on the first of these three commandments, which he took as the basis of God's existence, he briefly sketched his philosophical arguments for the existence of God with implications of His unity and incorporeality. This is discussed substantially in the *Guide of the Perplexed*. The second commandment indicates denying polytheism, which Maimonides equally emphasized. The last commandment demonstrates the unity of God that is also explained further in *The Guide*.²²²

The existence of God is also proven through the theory of potential and actual. All perceived things undergo two states before existing in reality. A thing must first be in a state of potential before it is actualized as real essence. No matter in this universe is devoid from this transition. Everything needs an agent to initiate existence. God becomes the mover, as suggested by Aristotle. He moves each matter from its potential state to an actual state. It is in potential state due to some obstacles within itself that hinder it from being actualized. Hence, God's existence is indeed necessary.²²³

The agent is essential in removing the obstacles and also has a role in creating the relation between the universe and other substances within their transition to actual state. However, the agent will cause potential to the being of actuals and other actuals caused by other agents due to this relation, which will lead to infinite causality. Thus,

²²¹ *Ibid*

²²² *Mishneh Torah*. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/332555/jewish/Maimonides-13-Principles-of-Faith.htm. 12 April 2013

²²³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 153

the real agent must be excluded from this chain of causality, as the real agent cannot be associated with these possibilities or else it would not exist. Another argument advocates that these possibilities only occur to material substance as they are connected to matter.²²⁴

Maimonides additionally emphasized four necessary elements that should be negated from God: corporeality, emotion or change, non-existence and similarity to any creature. He reiterated that non-existence could accidentally occur in one's argument when one does not possess correct understanding of the concept of potential and actual, which is also closely related to change. Maimonides advocated that God cannot be affected by changes occurring to transient things nor be associated with potential, for potential indicates His non-existence, therefore rendering created and temporal beings to likewise entail the corporeality of God.²²⁵ It can be discerned that Maimonides' propositions on God's existence are certainly intertwined with proofs of His incorporeality.

Maimonides then concluded that the real agent should not be in material form and must therefore be incorporeal. Maimonides differentiated between the existence of God and humans, whereby human existence must go through potentialities. On the other hand, God's existence is necessary and uncaused.

Maimonides expounded 25 propositions²²⁶ of the philosophers that founded the reasoning behind God's existence and unity.²²⁷ Nevertheless, it is noted that

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 153

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 78

²²⁶ There are seven important propositions held by Aristotle:

(P.3) Denial of the infinite regress: "the existence of causes and effects, of which the number is infinite, is impossible"

(P.5) Definition of change as motion: "every motion is a change and transition from potentiality to actuality"

(P.17) The existence of movers: "everything that is in motion requires a mover by necessity;" this mover can be outside the moved object, or in the body in motion

(P.19) Definition of possible existence: "everything that has a cause for its existence is only possible with regard to existence with respect to its own essence"

Maimonides, who was heavily influenced by Aristotle's logic, could no longer ignore his reasoning of cosmological matter. In proving the existence of God, Maimonides first elaborated the argument of His incorporeality. He claimed that the ultimate cause of all genesis and destruction from the motion of the spheres requires an agent to cause the motion. Thus, the mover could neither be corporeally separated from the spheres nor be a force indivisible from the spheres.²²⁸

The above argument was construed based on Aristotle's physics theory of motion. Although Aristotle did not contest this argument to prove God's existence, it was applied by medieval philosophers and reiterated by Maimonides. God has existed eternally in an actual state and became the eternal cause of motion, known as the First Mover.²²⁹

Apart from that, Maimonides proved the existence of God through another argument that begins with three possibilities regarding the nature of existence. First, all things are without beginning and end, which means all things are not subject to generation and corruption. Second, all things have a beginning and end, which indicates all things are subject to generation and corruption. Third, some are with beginning and end, and some are not subject to generation and corruption.²³⁰ All things must fall into one of these three categories.

(P.20) Definition of necessary existence: "everything that is necessarily existent with respect to its own essence has no cause for its existence in any way"

(P.25) Definition of a proximate mover: everything is comprised of matter and form. But inasmuch as matter does not move itself, there must be an agent, "a mover that moves the substratum so as to predispose it to receive the form." This mover is the proximate mover, which "predisposes the matter of a certain individual" (GP 2.Intro:239).

(P.26) Eternity of the universe: "I shall add to the premises mentioned before one further premise that affirms as necessary the eternity of the world. This premise . . . [consists of Aristotle's statement] that time and movement are eternal, perpetual, existing in actu." Maimonides noted in his explication of this premise that Aristotle's arguments in favor of this statement do not constitute a demonstration.

²²⁷ Aristotle was compelled to assume that time and motion are eternal and therefore resulted in the eternity of the universe. Maimonides perceives this to be possible with regard to the propositions of the philosophers. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 145

²²⁸ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 150

²²⁹ See Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 66

²³⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 152

The first argument is certainly absurd, since it is the most sensible to the human intellect that things exist and cease. The second argument is also inadmissible. If everything we perceive were only transient in nature, then all things would be destroyed and no beings would be able to produce anything.²³¹ Given that, we must admit our own existence, and subsequently the second argument cannot be accepted. Hence, it is impossible to say that all things either have a beginning and end or no things have a beginning and end. Maimonides then argued that if we ourselves exist and things around us exist, there must be a being that is not subject to a beginning and end, or generation and destruction. This being is rather a necessary existent and eternal in nature. The necessary existent must be excluded from plurality, corporeality and reliance on any cause for its existence.²³² Maimonides then summed up the existence of God with the borrowed notion of 'necessary existent' from Ibn Sīnā. He also distinguished between contingent and necessary beings, which determine existence with a beginning and end and existence without either.

According to Maimonides, God is not a substance whose existence is joined to an accident that may cause superadded elements to His Essence.²³³ It can be noted that Maimonides borrowed the concept of absolute existence from Avicenna, who advocated the concept of necessary and possible existence.²³⁴ According to Maimonides, there are two dimensions to the concept of necessary existence. First, necessary existence is on account of itself. Secondly, necessary existence is on account

²³¹ Here, the existence and destruction of all things will happen at the same time if this implies Aristotle's theory of infinite time. Eternal time and motion permit the generation of the universe and others. If time is finite, it would be impossible for the universe to exist, as nothing would precede its existence due to the inexistence of time. Hence, it is impossible to say all things have a beginning and ending.

²³² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 152

²³³ Maimonides' strong emphasis on God's incorporeality leads to negating accidents from being associated to God, which eventually entails negating attributes from God.

²³⁴ Insaf Ramadan. *Al-Taḥkīm al-Falsafī al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dar Kotaiba, 2004), 176

of external force.²³⁵ God exists necessarily on His own account. His demonstration of independent existence consequently cannot be attributed to any external cause. It is the effect of the eternal cause and must therefore itself be eternal. Whereas, necessary existence on account of external forces refers to the existence of the universe and natural order. In the latter case, existence on its own makes it possible to exist or not to exist. However, its existence is necessary due to the necessary being as the independent existent.²³⁶

This argument was clearly reiterated by Maimonides from Aristotle's philosophy. The theory of existence is due to the inability to explain the origin of material beings from an immaterial being (God). Therefore, according to the philosophers, this eternal being co-exists with God but nevertheless shares a different eternal entity.²³⁷

In addition, God's existence can also be proven through parables²³⁸ that Maimonides apparently borrowed from Jewish scholar Judah Halevi, whose book is known as *Kuzari*.²³⁹ This book is presented in the form of conversations between a rabbi and a pagan. He exemplified that the justice practiced in India does not

²³⁵ This argument is mentioned in Maimonides' proposition in demonstrating the existence of God, His unity and incorporeality intertwiningly. There are generally four philosophical arguments employed by Maimonides. i) God is incorporeal through demonstrating the impossibility of God being a distributed or indivisible force and also corporeal. ii) God's unity can be demonstrated only through cause and effect because incorporeal beings cannot be counted, as the relation of time is not applicable to God. iii) God is without beginning and end. Thus, He exists necessarily on account of Himself. iv) All substance moves from potential to actual. Hence, substance requires a mover to move it from one state to another. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 150-153

²³⁶ From the premise of necessary existence on account of the other stems the theory of necessary causation, which leads to the emanative theory and consequently, accepting the theory of an eternal universe. These theories are mostly dominated by Aristotle. Maimonides, who strongly upheld Aristotle's demonstrations, affirmed Avicenna's ideas in support of Aristotle's notion.

²³⁷ In the discourse on eternal being, there are mainly two differing notions: one, the eternal existent is the universe itself, as claimed by Aristotle, and two, the eternal existent refers to the eternal matter from which God created the universe and others, as proposed by Plato. This will be discussed later in the cosmological argument. Nevertheless, this theory is essential and is where Maimonides later departed from Aristotle's teaching.

²³⁸ Employing parables was one of Maimonides' most profound methods of describing homonymous terms. Refer to the discussion on anthropomorphism later in this chapter.

²³⁹ See Yahuda Halevi. *The Kuzari in Defense of the Despised Faith*. N. Daniel Korobkin (trans & annotated). (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1998)

necessarily indicate a just king. Maimonides might have borrowed his arguments on the existence of God, except that Halevi endeavored proofs of divine intervention in the history of the Israelites through the prophets compared to the syllogistic cosmic proofs presented by Maimonides in demonstrating God's existence.²⁴⁰

Maimonides connoted that the existence of a king can be demonstrated through his accidents, actions or even most remote relations to other objects. Correspondingly, God's existence can be demonstrated through His creation of the universe. However, His existence must be discerned from other existences, as others can be perceived through accidents.

Here, it can be deduced that in providing proof of God's existence, Maimonides mainly collated Aristotle and Avicenna's views. Maimonides' proofs consist of God being the first cause of motion, He does not move nor is subject to a beginning and end, and is one and incorporeal. His essence is an absolute essence devoid of any accidents. The first cause also exists necessarily and does not require any other cause for the deity to exist.

3.2.2 The Cosmological Argument

It has been strongly affirmed that God exists and is incorporeal. Maimonides' concept of causality, emanation and particularization has also been discussed in looking at the relation between God and the universe. Now it is also equally important to explicate God's relation to the universe. The Scriptures describe creation without clarifying whether it is something eternal, created or emanated from God. Hence, religious scholars and philosophers differ in their perception of the verses.

²⁴⁰ S. Pines. *Philosophic Sources of The Guide of the Perplexed*, cxxxiii.

Maimonides examined what he observed to be the three main approaches to accounting for the world. They are: (i) Moses' theory of a free act and creation *ex nihilo*, (ii) Plato's imposition of form on pre-existing matter, and (iii) Aristotle's view of eternal emanation.²⁴¹

The first theory holds that God created the universe out of nothing. There was no existence at that point in time except God. The entire universe became by an act of divine will. The act of creation by God could not be compared to that by man. A sculptor who makes something requires raw material. In contrary, God's act of creation is unique, it does not require any raw material. The creation involves a radical origin of existence and God is off the scale.²⁴²

The second theory was advocated by Plato, who agreed with Moses' theory of free will as the pre-requisite for creation. However, Plato disagreed with creation out of nothing. Plato held that it is impossible to make something out of nothing. It is only possible for God to do things within the realm of rational possibility, just like it is impossible for God to create two opposite properties, or produce another being like Him, or change Himself into a body. Thus, when God exists, there already existed some primordial matter that has no form. God is the one with will to give it form.²⁴³ Neither does God exist without the substance nor does the latter exist without God. But Plato did not hold that the existence of that substance equals in rank with God, for God is the cause of that existence.

Third, the eternity of the universe as advocated by Aristotle suggests that both God and the universe are eternal. There was never a beginning according to Aristotle.²⁴⁴ God has neither free will nor creativity in His own creation. The universe occurs through the act of God as the first mover, which will automatically cause others

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* 45

²⁴² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 172

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 172

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 172

to move in an emanative way. The main argument in which Aristotle denied that free will is associated with God is that God is a perfect being that is already in a perfect state. Change to Him or the universe would only denote inconsistencies within Him. Thus, God's activity is constant, His perfection is completely actualized, and He has no decisions to consider or potential to develop.²⁴⁵

There are exoteric and esoteric positions in Maimonides' view on creation. His exoteric view suggested the Mosaic theory of creation. According to Maimonides, refuting creation is similar to refuting the prophecy and miracles in religious belief. Thus, the entire religious system may be corrupted by the disbelief in creation ex nihilo.

On the other hand, Maimonides' esoteric view²⁴⁶ inclined towards the Platonic outlook. Although he seemed to reject the Platonic view and accept the scriptural text, Maimonides did, however, accept the possibility of Plato's view for the sake of reconciling both theories of creation and eternity. From Plato's theory, Plato believed that existence is an accident of a thing. A thing is still considered a thing even before it undergoes the accident of existence. Hence, nothing is called non-existent, because everything has existed in its potential form. Similarly, the universe existed in a potential form called pre-eternal matter. This matter existed with God's power shaping its existence, which means it did not co-exist with God or precede God's existence. However, its existence in the form of potential had already existed in time.

²⁴⁵ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 173. See also Kenneth Seeskin. *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*. 45

²⁴⁶ Maimonides previously suggested in his treatise esoteric and exoteric levels of meaning in the Guide, especially in the account of beginning and the account of the chariot, where his expositions of truth might not be clear cut. He calls upon his students to unveil the meanings by themselves, as these topics are exceedingly profound and not every intellect is able to grasp them. He employed the concealment method just like the sages employ parables to hide sublime philosophical topics. An esoteric meaning denotes a view that might be either ultimately harmonized with belief or contradictory to it. According to Strauss, the truth of Maimonides' opinion is often rooted in philosophical doctrine. This is very similar to Plato's Republic, which vouches his words for the sake of the public readers. Nevertheless, in contrast to Strauss, a radical esoteric, some scholars also suggested Maimonides' attempt at harmonizing the Scriptures with philosophy. The Guide thus represents a work of synthesis and contradictions reconciled. See Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 21-22

However, God has no potential form or eternal matter. In fact, God initiates form to matter as He pleases and constantly creates other things as and when He wills it, for God is the cause of every existence just like clay is to the potter or iron is to the smith.²⁴⁷ Prime matter is created but in a different way from other creations, and it can be destroyed in the same manner as man is reduced to dust. Matter is created from nothing and since its creation has its own properties, it becomes the source of every creation and destruction.²⁴⁸ Only pre-eternal matter exists without beginning. The rest of things precede with a potential form from eternal matter, as Maimonides claimed that the intellect cannot comprehend the existence of a thing out of nothingness and in potential form.²⁴⁹ Moreover, corporeal objects cannot originate from an incorporeal substance. Thus, the universe can only originate from this pre-eternal matter.

Plato's view does not undercut the foundation of Judaism and at the same time is still consistent with the Aristotelian theory of time, which Maimonides very much upheld. Maimonides clearly disagreed with the theologians who straightaway disregarded Aristotle's view as being demonstrative. To Maimonides, although Aristotle's argument is questionable, it is nevertheless not impossible. Furthermore, given the position where one can never demonstrate creation with certainty as there are limits to the human intellect,²⁵⁰ Maimonides seemed mostly inclined towards upholding philosophical demonstration but without undermining scriptural belief.

The premise of the world having a beginning easily makes sense to the intellect. If the world has a beginning, it must necessarily have a creator as the cause.

²⁴⁷ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 172

²⁴⁸ To Maimonides, the role of prime matter is similar to how Aristotle described motion and the concept of potential and actual. The process of genesis and destruction happening endlessly is just like man cannot conceive the idea that rotation has ever been absent.

²⁴⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 181

²⁵⁰ In describing limits of the human intellect, Maimonides believed there is a considerable difference between one person and another's capacity. While one man can discover things by himself, the other might not be able to capture it even if taught by any means. Man advances theories and contradicts one another. To Maimonides, the fact is that a boundary is undoubtedly set to humans that cannot be bypassed. *Ibid*, 40

However, Maimonides found similar truth with regard to the premise of the eternal universe. One could still prove the existence of God through the existence of a being that is neither a body nor a form of a body, which is one and eternal and is not preceded by any cause.²⁵¹ Maimonides claimed that the notion of a created universe is more sensible to the logic. Nevertheless, through the eternal universe of the Aristotelian, God's unity and incorporeality seem to construct a better argument.

Between the exoteric and esoteric positions, Pines suggests Maimonides' skeptic position. Maimonides exerted much effort in demonstrating the inconsistency between the scriptural view of creation and the Aristotelian stance on eternity. Yet, he was unable to claim the Aristotelian theory is supreme as the thesis has not been fully demonstrated.²⁵² He was nevertheless also careful in accepting the theologians' argument of creation, as he still believed that the Kalām proof of dialectical form is weak and inconclusive.²⁵³

Thus, it can be observed that Maimonides attempted to posit eternal pre-existing matter to the eternal universe, which simultaneously includes creation and will. The pre-existence of eternal matter from which the world is created was in fact known as "the nonexistent" by the Platonist. However, Aristotle conceived eternal matter as an infinite succession of generated things in the eternal world and was also considered nonexistent only in an accidental sense.²⁵⁴

According to Wolfson, Maimonides perhaps employed the word *ba'da al-'adam* (after privation), which is equivalent to *lā min shai'* (not from something) that

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 111

²⁵² Pines. "How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed" in *The Guide of the Perplexed*. liv. Although Maimonides never mentioned in his treatise accepting Plato's theory, Plato's theory was the most feasible vis-a-vis the Biblical verses. This is because the Platonic version does not perceive all miracles as necessarily impossible, unlike Aristotle's version that rejects all possibility of any miracles.

²⁵³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 178

²⁵⁴ This appears similar to what Aristotle had in fact initiated: i) nothing can come out of nonexistence in an absolute sense; ii) matter is not nonexistent in an absolute sense, it is only accidentally nonexistent. It is not a total nothing but is something in some sense; iii) matter is the primary substance of each thing. Everything comes into existence from this matter and it inheres every being. Wolfson. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. 364

reflects Aristotle's statement 'to come from something' in the sense of *ex nihilo*.²⁵⁵
This is another esoteric theory.²⁵⁶

Maimonides' view concerning the cosmological argument can be seen as a synthesis of three different arguments. He himself claimed that he would try to demonstrate the theory of creation with philosophical reasoning. His model can be further understood through Aristotle's theory of causality and emanation, Plato's theory of pre-eternal matter and finally, the Biblical notion of God's will and particularization.

3.2.3 Maimonides on Causality

To further elaborate Maimonides' argument on the cosmological premise, it is essential to highlight the causational argument that was extensively addressed by Maimonides in his *Guide*. Causation plays a central role of discussion in determining the nature of God's relation to the universe, because it tends to demonstrate the eternity of God and His superiority over His creations or otherwise.

To begin, Maimonides elaborated on the difference in applying the terms agent and cause in reference to God. According to Maimonides, there is no difference in claiming that both terms are equally correct. However, both imply different connotations in relation to the existence of the universe. The term agent was employed by the *theologians* and does not allow God to co-exist with the universe. The term cause denotes the implication of God co-existing with the universe and its

²⁵⁵ Wolfson. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. 372

²⁵⁶ Maimonides stated two reasons for the contradictions in his *Guide*. The first arises from the necessity to teach and make someone understand, as there is certainly obscure matter that is hard to understand. Hence, the teacher must accordingly substitute a simpler lesson that will help the student perceive better. The second reason is that it is important to consider concealing some parts and not disclosing everything in discussing obscure matters. Therefore, the layman may not be aware of the contradictions. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 10

inseparability from Him.²⁵⁷ It also entails understanding of potential and actual as proposed by Aristotle. If the term cause is taken further to the notion of potential and actual, it will lead to God's co-existence with the universe. Unless it is understood as mere actual, this connotes the preceding existence of God. After all, Maimonides agreed with both terms and found no contradiction between them. Even if the Creator is referred to as Agent,²⁵⁸ Maimonides affirmed that the work may possibly co-exist with its Agent through the theory of the Intellect, Intelligen²⁵⁹ and Intelligible.

From the argument above, Maimonides seems to have introduced the idea of emanation of God who has a role in sustaining existing forms. Maimonides noted "It is through the existence of God that all things exist, and it is He who maintains their existence by the process which is called emanation."²⁶⁰ In another account, Maimonides described God as the force that controls all spheres, with which the spheres possess intellect to comprehend God's command.²⁶¹ Hence, the non-existence of God is impossible, as His non-existence would destroy other existing things too. For God is the end cause and the cause of every existence, be it a distant cause or intermediate cause; in other words, God is the ultimate form of the universe.

Moreover, Maimonides affirmed that God must also be declared the end of all ends and the ultimate cause of everything. The final purpose of a continuous existing cause will eventually render to the will of God, or some claim, to the wisdom of God as mentioned by Maimonides. Thus, Maimonides deduced that God is the Agent, the

²⁵⁷ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 102

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 104. To Maimonides, God can be seen as the final cause and also agent in every creation. However, God is not similar to other temporal forms. As He is the Primal Cause, He possesses no beginning or end and He is surely not connected to any substance that produces a material form of being, as Aristotle discussed in the Language of Physics. Maimonides attempted to induce an intellectual form instead of material, which transcends any existing forms that constantly take place.

²⁵⁹ This term was employed by M.Friedlander in his translation of *The Guide of the Perplexed*. It was translated from the term 'aqil that refers to God as the Intelligen, the Cognizing subject.

²⁶⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 104

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 118 & 159

Form and the End, as He cannot be an Agent per se without being attributed as the Ultimate Cause.²⁶²

Maimonides also elaborated that the vital principle of cause explains that everything except for the Primal Cause owes its origin to these four elements: a) substance, b) form c) the agent and d) the final cause. In the science of physics, no transient can escape these four causes. This certainly refers to the concept of causality, which is known to have been established by Aristotle.

With regard to the theory of potential and actual, Maimonides established the concept of God being the Intellect, Intelligen (intellectually cognizing subject) and Intelligible (intellectually cognized object). Maimonides affirmed that these three notions certainly do not constitute the plurality of God's essence.²⁶³ Although borrowed from other philosophers, his proposition is somewhat different. These notions are also applied based on the emanative concept of God, which is the belief of the Kabbalistic Jews.²⁶⁴ For instance, Maimonides mentioned an account "the Lord live" (Ruth iii 13) and not 'by the life of the Lord' that denotes His life is His essence.²⁶⁵ To Maimonides, His life must not be separable from His essence.²⁶⁶

²⁶² *Ibid*, 104-105

²⁶³ The Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible can also be deduced as a result of Maimonides' attempt to reread Aristotle's theory of causation that refers to physical causation, e.g. a shadow is caused by a body or heat is caused by fire. He negated that from Aristotle's theory and reaffirmed Aristotle's causation in the relation of the intellect, intellectus and intellectum. In relation to humans, Maimonides forwarded an example of a situation, where the intellect refers to the power possessed by someone while the Intelligen is the person himself whose power is in a potential moment and only becomes actual when the person acts upon his power. The object results from the act of the intellect and therefore becomes the intelligible. This cycle is suitable to all transient beings except God. Maimonides delineated this from God, as He cannot be associated with potentials, since being in a potential condition would negate His constant and active intellect. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 102

²⁶⁴ The Kabbalistic idea of God seems almost identical to the philosophers' emanative theory. It encompasses ten sefirot, which construe the relation of God with the world. Most names of the sefirot describe God as wise, understanding, glorious, just and so forth, which philosophers commonly refer to as divine attributes. The commonality can be seen further in its origin. The ten sefirot did not originate from the Kabbalah. However, they appeared in the Middle Ages in the book *Sefer yezirah* (Book of Creation), which was influenced by the Jewish neo-Pythagoreanism, a Greek philosophical theory. The *Sefer yazirah* advocates the idea that God created the universe by means of permutations and combinations of the ten decimal numbers. Segal, Eliezer. *Introducing Judaism*. (London and New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2009), 145-146

²⁶⁵ This will be further explained in Chapter 3 in the discussion on the attributes of God according to Maimonides.

Therefore, the three notions are imminent in God: God is the iIntellect and is always in action as the Intelligen that comprehends constantly, and the comprehended objects are those that are likewise His essence.

Thus, by affirming overflow unto God, Maimonides went beyond rational and systematic thinking. Nevertheless, by pointing out the emanation of God, he likewise emphasized God's activity as through a separate intellect that overflows like a source of water emanating through every intellect. In addition, it highlights God as the primary efficient cause who is incorporeal and one. He also causes His knowledge to overflow to the prophets. Thus, His whole action is called overflow.

“The overflow coming from Him for the bringing into being of separate intellects, overflows likewise from these intellects, so that one of them brings another one into being and this continues up to the Active Intellect. With the latter, the bringing into being of separate intellects comes to an end. Moreover a certain other act of bringing into being overflows from every separate intellect until the spheres come to an end with the sphere of the moon.”²⁶⁷

The intellect that overflows from God towards humans is thus the relationship between man and God. If a person attempts to strengthen the intellect, the closer he will get to God. In this sense, it indicates that the mind's activity is beyond systematic thinking.

Besides, Maimonides also held that the spheres possess intelligence (ruling power) that acts as an intermediate element between God and the material world.²⁶⁸ This is how the emanating process takes place, as God's indirect influence is immersed through the spheres and the universe. God as the Active Intellect becomes the Intelligen and Intelligible.

²⁶⁶ This can be seen as parallel to the Mu'tazilite's view on God's essence and attributes. Wolfson, Harry. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1976), 133

²⁶⁷ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 169-170

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 104, 115 & 159

It can be deduced that Maimonides perceived that God's influence and His emanation overflow throughout the spheres. Meanwhile, Aristotle believed that God co-exists with other spheres and the existence of spheres occurs through continuous cause and effect, where God is considered the First Cause.²⁶⁹ It can be seen that both Maimonides and Aristotle perceived God's influence unto the spheres in indirect and direct approaches, respectively.

To Maimonides, it was difficult to imagine God as the direct force behind everything that happens in this world. Therefore, seeing His emanation is more appropriate in describing His incorporeality, as we can only imagine corporeal beings. For Maimonides, to understand the direct cause, one should replace the cause of things through the angels that act upon God's commands. However, in apprehending metaphysics, Aristotle tended to adopt physical science in his anticipation in figuring out the design of God.

In Maimonides' endeavor to reconcile his argument with the Scriptures, Maimonides demonstrated the similarity between the creation and Genesis. He compared the word 'first' with the word 'beginning' as the term 'first' referred to the theory of necessary cause and 'beginning' indicated the creation of the universe. In his analysis, he found that the term 'first' was not necessarily perceived as the principal cause.²⁷⁰ It is mentioned in Genesis that the term 'first' indicated the sequence of time "When God first (*tehillat*) spoke to Hosea" (Hosea 1: 2). Whereas in Hebrew, the term 'Genesis' connoted the word *Bere'shit*, where *reshith* connoted principle, which indicated the principle of every living being. Thus, the first verse can be translated as "In the beginning (principle) God created the heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1).²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ *Ibid* 170

²⁷⁰ He employed an example: there is a first inhabitant of a house and the second inhabitant comes next. Here, the first does not connote the meaning of principal. However, it indicates the sequence of inhabitants.

²⁷¹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 212

Hence, it is clear that the theory of the creation of the universe is compatible with the Scriptures.

Just how the beginning of the universe was affirmed by Maimonides, the question of the destruction of the heaven and universe are likewise addressed. According to Maimonides, it all depends on God's will and determination whether to sustain, destroy or reduce it to nothing.²⁷² It is a fact that man's faculties are beyond the capability to perceive the heaven and its future.

It can be seen that Maimonides took a different stance from Aristotle on the account of creation. Maimonides held unto the non-existence of a thing before it is created, while Aristotle believed that it had already existed in a state of potential. Secondly, Maimonides agreed with Aristotle that prime matter is the source of genesis and destruction. However, Maimonides inferred there is creation from nothing. Meanwhile, Aristotle believed that the universe co-exists eternally with God. It is similar with motion and the circular motion of the spheres, which cannot perish in this present state. However, both must be recognized as brought into being in the beginning. Furthermore, Aristotle argued that motion and circular motion are eternal. Lastly, Aristotle adopted the necessity for a state of potentiality to precede all actual geneses. Maimonides agreed that the state of potential occurs in the present, as everything that is produced originates from some being. However, if a being is created out of nothing, it does not necessarily have to be in a state of potential according to Maimonides.²⁷³ It is apparent that Maimonides could not agree more with Aristotle who believed that every being has a preceding nature within its essence, before it comes into existence.

²⁷² *Ibid*, 198

²⁷³ *Ibid*, 180

It is obvious that the philosophers rejected the creation of the universe on account of the strong affirmation of necessary existence. However, Maimonides had a mind of his own. He claimed that Aristotle's theory of necessary existence was not directly or purposely established to prove metaphysical truth. Necessary result only occurs to creation, while the First Cause is not related to the causation.²⁷⁴ It is noted that Maimonides accepted Aristotle's theory on the nature of law. Nevertheless, when it comes to the relation between God and the spheres, he did not fully agree with Aristotle. Therefore, Maimonides effectively affirmed that the universe must have a beginning and cannot precede the existence of God.

As compared to his argument on the incorporeality of God, Maimonides mentioned that proof of the eternal universe appears to be vague in the Scriptures. God's incorporeality is demonstrated by proof in Biblical passages, where understanding anthropomorphism in its literal sense can be clearly refuted. However, in order to accept the eternity of the universe, certain foundations of religion are to be denied, such as disbelieving in miracles and revelations. Although Plato and other philosophers believed in the transience of the heavens and the universe, they still did not believe that God could have created it out of nothing.²⁷⁵ This also negates God's power to perform miracles.

With that, the argument of a created universe appears superior to that of an eternal universe. As Maimonides noted, "Owing to the absence of all proof, we reject the theory of the eternity of the universe; and it is for this very reason that the noblest minds spent and will spend their days in research."²⁷⁶ Furthermore, according to Maimonides, it is what Abraham and Moses held according to the Scriptures. Hence,

²⁷⁴ *Ibid* 192. It can be observed that Maimonides supported Aristotle by applauding him as a great philosopher.

²⁷⁵ To them, it will not cause defects to God, even if He could not perform impossibilities, as impossibilities are constant in a logical sense and not dependent on the agent's action. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 172

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*

Maimonides affirmed that adhering to the understanding that the universe is eternal is contrary to the fundamental principles of religion.

3.2.4 The Particularization Argument

Maimonides viewed the theory of determinism and free will as one of the most important issues. This is because by determining God's free will, it preserves the foundation of the law that is considered as the core of religious belief.²⁷⁷ The particularization argument reiterated by Maimonides was originally formulated in the *Kalam* argument.²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Maimonides presented his argument in an Aristotelian model.

Maimonides rejected the supposition of Juwayni's premise, stating that the characteristics of individual objects may change. For Maimonides, individual objects operate conforming to natural law and natural forces. However, Maimonides did not reject the particularization notion to structural features of the world.²⁷⁹ Maimonides found the arbitrariness within the structure of the spheres that compelled him to employ the theory of particularization. He was not satisfied with Aristotle's opinion on the design of the spheres, which affirmed a necessary emanative way of design through efficient cause that totally rejects God's direct contact with occurrences.

Aristotle also denied God's power to change any of His creations once created, as

²⁷⁷ The foundation of the law includes miracles in religious belief. God's free will demonstrates the possibility of impossibilities in human perception, which are commonly known as miracles. In the theory of free will, God's will is not limited to any consequences. Therefore, the creation of the universe and its affairs must be subject to God's own particularization. Kenneth Seeskin. *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*. 57

²⁷⁸ This theory was initiated by al-Juwayni in the *Kalam* discussion. The particularizer (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) or preponderant (*muraḥijih*) demonstrates God is a deity that possesses will, power and knowledge. Hence, God as the particularizer and preponderant created the world voluntarily and of His own free will. He did not create it out of other necessary causes. Al-Juwayni's theory was widely employed by other theologians as well as al-Ghazālī himself and Shahrastani. See Al-Juwayni. *Kitab al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi' al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-I'tiqād*. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah) 17

²⁷⁹ Davidson. *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. 193

eternity results in a fixed law. Therefore, Maimonides affirmed particularization unto God as part of affirming God's direct relation as an agent of the universe.

As mentioned, there were also philosophers who believed in the eternity of the universe through God's will and determination of design.²⁸⁰ However, Maimonides refuted their argument as it did not differ from the Aristotelian view, as the belief also leans towards the co-existence of God.²⁸¹ If they believed that the universe is eternal, they must have assumed that changes in God's will or action are inadmissible. This is therefore similar to Aristotle's view that the existence of the universe precedes the existence of God through necessary existence, while philosophers similarly held that it precedes, but with His will and determination. Aristotle believed that God's pleasure and satisfaction are upon which necessary derives from His existence and it is impossible for God to wish for a different existence. Conversely, Maimonides argued that determination and design apply only to things that are not yet in existence, when there is a possibility that posterior existence is in accordance with their design.²⁸² Maimonides' particularization model in fact emerged from resolving the inexplicability of various features of the physical universe. There is no way Maimonides could accept Aristotle's theory of necessary result of certain permanent laws through emanation.²⁸³ Thus, the best answer to the variations in the spheres is only the voluntary determination and a result of a design by God.

It can be noted that Maimonides responded arguingly to the claims advocated by philosophers in refuting the theory of creation. Philosophers claimed that if the

²⁸⁰ This is the belief of Plato and his followers. Although they believed that God possesses will in creating the universe, the universe should still co-exist with God in its form of potentiality. This is definitely opposed to Maimonides who negated that God is in transition of potential and actual.

²⁸¹ His opinion of Plato is nevertheless disputable, as Maimonides held an esoteric view for the sake of the layman readers. In his esoteric view, he seemed to accept Plato's stance as a synthesis of Aristotle and Biblical verses.

²⁸² Maimonides gave an example where he is pleased and satisfied that he is endowed with eyes and hands and it is impossible that he should desire it otherwise. Yet his eyes and hands are not the result of his design and determination

²⁸³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 188

universe is created, then the transition from potential to actual would also occur to God as the creator. Whereas, Maimonides stressed that potential and actual only occur to corporeal beings and not God. Secondly, Maimonides distinguished between the human will and the will of God, as the philosophers argued that change, will and obstacles of God would only deny His eternity. Similarly, in their opinion on wisdom for creating the world, it must be eternal and thus the universe must be eternal. Maimonides posited that God's wisdom and methods are unknown to humans.²⁸⁴

Although Maimonides agreed that the natural order is an instance of God practicing free will, it is obvious Maimonides was not fully satisfied with this. This is mainly the reason why Maimonides still discussed Aristotle's view, which to him held a systematic argument. Maimonides did not deny miracles as a whole but attempted to systematize religion in a rational concept. As Seeskin quoted, Maimonides attempted to 'demythologize' the biblical narrative.²⁸⁵ Thus, Maimonides' notion of particularization is not more than just to showcase his rabbinical position on Biblical text.

Concluding Remarks

It can be concluded that Maimonides maintained the premise of God's existence from the basis of a beginning and ending. Maimonides held a complicated position on the proposal of a created universe. He began to demonstrate the possibility of creation ex-nihilo without refuting the possibility of an eternal world. Maimonides asserted that creation does not imply proof of God's existence and therefore no precise demonstration of creation can be proven. Thus, the biblical passages cannot be

²⁸⁴ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 181-183

²⁸⁵ Seeskin, Kenneth. *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*. (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1991), 22

understood literally. Nevertheless, he also mentioned that creation is a fundamental principle of the Jewish religion, which is similar to believing in God's unity. Maimonides chose to believe creation upon the authority of Prophecy, which demonstrated his view that belief in miracles is likewise essential. In contrary, believing in eternity would entail disbelieving all miracles, and it must therefore be rejected.

Although Maimonides detested the possibility of Aristotelian argument as being demonstrated as the truth, he suggested that our knowledge of God depends on the premise of eternity. Furthermore, in inferring divine design through God's will, Maimonides on one hand agreed with God's volition and on another hand proposed the difficulty in understanding the equivocal interpretation of the term 'purpose.'

The discerning point between Maimonides and Aristotle is apparent with regard to the nature of design. Aristotle clearly advocated that the relation of God and the universe is the result of necessary cause and effect. This indicates that the nature of design in this manner is constant and impossible to change. It further negates the result of God's design, choice and desire, for if one assumes God's will, it will lead to the non-existence of a thing before it exists in actual form. Here, Maimonides argued that everything that comes to exist is the result of both natural causation and God's will and determination. Maimonides, who opposed the theologians, seemed to ignore the natural law and held that every being created and every event happens solely out of God's will.²⁸⁶ Although Maimonides accepted the law of nature as did Aristotle, it does not mean that he accepted the necessary result of certain permanent laws as Aristotle held. He found it quite impossible to obtain answers to questions that might arise endlessly. Therefore, he endeavored the possibility of God's will and determination, which supports creation ex nihilo.

²⁸⁶ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 184

Besides, a major divergence between Maimonides and Aristotle is in their opinions on the co-existence of the First Cause with other beings. Maimonides emphasized on proof from the scripture that maintains God's power to create the spheres. Moreover, he neither denied the possibility of creation nor the possibility of an eternal universe. Maimonides seemed inclined towards Aristotle's arguments. Nevertheless, in coming to a conclusion, he seemed more inclined towards the Scriptural proofs of creation. Thus, it can be summed that Maimonides tended to be apologetic towards Aristotle's arguments, as he claimed Aristotle did not necessarily intend to infer the eternity of the universe, though his proofs clearly indicated this.

3.3 Comparative Analysis on the Existence of God

Given the conclusions set forth based on the two scholars regarding God's existence and relation to the existence of the universe, we are now in a position to view al-Ghazālī and Maimonides comparatively in their discourses on four main topics, namely God's existence, the cosmological arguments, necessary causation and the particularization argument.

3.3.1 Proofs of God's Existence

Prior to discussing God's existence, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides categorized existence into two parts, which connote God's existence and other existences. Al-Ghazālī categorized existence into two: necessary existence and possible existence. Maimonides on the other hand categorized necessary existence into necessary existence on its own account and necessary existence due to some external force. In the categorization of possible existence, Maimonides did not directly discuss necessary

existence. However, he admitted that all contingencies are considered possible existence. This was proposed by Aristotle, which Maimonides reiterated approvingly.

It is seemingly obvious there is a divergence between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' categorizations of necessary existence. Al-Ghazālī coined necessary existence as referring to God per se while Maimonides understood necessary existence in a dual manner: one, referring to God and the other referring to the universe as iterated by Aristotle, or eternal matter as applied by Plato.

Al-Ghazālī conversely argued in his *Iqtisad* that if the universe is eternal as claimed by the philosophers, and whose existence is attributed to its categorization as necessary existence on account of others, there would be two eternals and that is impossible. This would simultaneously lead to negating God's oneness and eternal existence. Nevertheless, Maimonides had claimed earlier that the classification into two forms would not cause two necessary existences, since the absolute independent existence would only be that of God. God exists on account of His essence, whereas other necessary existence occurs due to an external factor, God.

According to Maimonides, necessary existence of its own account is the force that would then be the 'being' that possesses absolute existence. It therefore becomes certain there must be a being that has absolutely independent existence and is the source of the existence of all transient things. Thus, according to Aristotle, with whom Maimonides agreed, there must be in existence such a being that is the effect of an eternal cause and must therefore itself be eternal.

Thus, it can be observed that God's necessary existence was generally agreed upon by both scholars. The main discrepancy is in their argument on necessary existence due to external factors, which is closely related to the cosmological discourse that will be discussed in the subsequent sub-topic.

In establishing the concept of necessary existence, however, it is apparent that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides read Ibn Sīnā who coined the categorization of necessary and possible existences. The concept of necessary existence is nevertheless in line with the peripatetic philosophers' route of argument. It can be seen that in reiterating this concept al-Ghazālī was mindful and objectively criticized the shortcomings of the proposition.

One of the propositions from which al-Ghazālī withdrew the list of propositions with regards to necessary existence was the concept of potential and actual. Ibn Sīnā incorporated this concept to explain necessary causation, which he accepted as part of the debate that is also seen in Maimonides' discourse and other peripatetic philosophers who accepted the suggestion of an eternal universe. Al-Ghazālī, however, strongly refuted the eternity of the universe and thus refuted the concept of potential and actual in God's necessary existence.

Al-Ghazālī refuted the theory of actual and potential by rebutting necessary causation. When one thing is in a state of potential, it indicates that it already has the form of actual imbued within its essence. The actual must then realize the form of potential, which is readily inherent within the form. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand argued that it is possible for God's power to create something that is not necessarily to be realized from its form. Furthermore, it is impossible for two accidents to inhere a form, as advocated in the theory of potentialities. The theory of potential and actual subsequently implies a deficiency of God's power, with which al-Ghazālī completely disagreed as it would also eventually entail understanding necessary causation. Thus, al-Ghazālī absolutely repudiated this theory from being part of the proposition on God's necessary existence.

Al-Ghazālī's explanation of the term 'necessary being' was not present in either his *Ihyā'* or *Iqtīṣād* as in most other discussions on God. However, he elaborated

this in his *Maqāṣid* by reiterating Ibn Sīnā's logic with some modification. Meanwhile, in his *Iḥyā'* and *Iqtīṣād* al-Ghazālī only mentioned God's necessary existence according to the Scriptures as well as logical and sensory proofs. This is perhaps due to the highly philosophical form of discussion that took place on the necessary existence of God that may not be as essential to the layman.

On the other hand, Maimonides emphasized God's necessary existence in *The Guide* quite extensively by reiterating Aristotle's demonstration of the threefold proof of God's existence, unity and incorporeality. The theory of necessary existence does not only define God's existence according to Maimonides, but the argument is certainly closely intertwined with the notion of the existence of the universe held by the philosophers in proving the teleological design of God and the universe.

In sum, both appear to defend the same argument that God is a necessary existent in demonstrating His existence. While al-Ghazālī refuted some of the requirements, Maimonides did not find any deficiencies with Ibn Sīnā's proposition of necessary existence. This is because he accepted Ibn Sīnā's theory of potential and actual, which entails an emanative perception of God and necessary causation as discussed further subsequently.

3.3.2 The Cosmological Argument

On this topic, it is generally attempted to demonstrate the relation of God's existence with the beginning of the universe according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. Two claims were made by theologians and scholars: creation ex nihilo and the eternal universe.

Al-Ghazālī's fundamental argument stems from his premise on the contingency of the universe, which compels the need for a creator. In contrary, Maimonides argued

two possibilities: a created and eternal being.²⁸⁷ Maimonides attempted to be neutral in searching for the stronger argument. As discussed above, he found that the premise of eternity effectively leads to proof of God's incorporeality and unity but it denies miracles of God. However, Maimonides did not agree with the premise of eternity as a whole²⁸⁸ because to Maimonides, the argument of a created universe for the theologians, despite being a weaker argument, is actually closer to the teachings of the Scriptures.

As a theologian, al-Ghazālī clearly demonstrated his syllogistic approach. Contrarily, Maimonides said that the *Kalam* argument on temporal creation is not as demonstrative as the Aristotelian argument on the eternal universe.²⁸⁹ Perhaps this is due to Aristotle's systematic method of demonstrating creation through physical sciences, for instance the theory of potential and actual. Whereas theologians basically prove the creation of the universe only through conceptual thinking of the intellect to construct the argument of God's power.

The theory of a created universe according to al-Ghazālī is construed on three main arguments. First is the argument of the atom,²⁹⁰ its generation and destruction. Second is the argument of particularization and third is the argument of creation out of

²⁸⁷ "The universe must either be eternal or created. If the universe is eternal, there must exist a being that is neither a body nor a force in a body, which is one, that being God. On the other hand, if it is created, there must necessarily exist a being that caused the beginning; therefore the universe was created by God". Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 154

²⁸⁸ Maimonides mainly disagreed with an eternal universe as Aristotle argued, as it seemingly disregards miracles from God's power. However, Maimonides agreed with three elements of an eternal universe: first, the argument of eternal matter; second, the segregation of matter into potential and actual; third, the argument of necessary causation.

²⁸⁹ "Because all proofs of creation have weak points and cannot be considered convincing except by those who do not know the difference between a proof, dialectical argument and a sophism." Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 110. See also Stern, Josef. "Maimonides' Demonstrations: Principles and Practice" in *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (10), 2001, 47-84

²⁹⁰ In the argument of the atom there are basically four main principles: the establishment of the existence of accidents; the establishment of the creation of accidents; the establishment of the impossibility for atoms to be stripped of accidents; and the establishment of the impossibility for created things to be without the first. It can be drawn from these principles that as much as atoms are created, the universe as a whole is also created. Wolfson. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. 133

nothing. In proving God's existence, it is observed that al-Ghazālī was firm with his premise of a created universe.²⁹¹

Al-Ghazālī held that God created the universe out of nothing. God is considered the creator of every single thing. To produce something out of nothing is possible for God. Similarly, Maimonides also thought that God is the agent who creates everything from nothing, in parallel to the Law of Moses.²⁹² Philosophers, on the other hand, could not perceive God as having created the universe out of nothing because He needs to be a potential agent before He can be an actual agent, and must have passed from a state of potentiality to actual, which is only possible for God as an eternal being. Thus, in the attempt to prove that everything was produced and came into existence from non-existence, Maimonides used examples of the physics law, such as humans having originated from a mere clot of blood that eventually developed into different body parts and so on.

Speaking on creation out of nothing, al-Ghazālī argued that every single creation is produced by God from nothingness except with God's will and particularization. Maimonides similarly held that all occurs through God's volition and determination. In fact, Maimonides accepted this "to be the best argument" of the theologians.²⁹³ Nevertheless, Maimonides also supported the Aristotelian framework that indicates every creation must go through the process of potential and actual. Besides, in arguing from the premise of an eternal universe, Maimonides likewise held

²⁹¹ "Every temporal being has a cause for its beginning; the universe is temporal; therefore the universe must possess a cause for its beginning." Al-Ghazālī. *Al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*. 91

²⁹² As quoted by Maimonides "He then produced from nothing all existing things such as they are by His will and desire. Even time itself is among the things created..." Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 171

²⁹³ *Ibid*, 136

the emanative theory of Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible of God, which is apparent in his explication.²⁹⁴

Maimonides contradicted Aristotle by claiming that created things possess different properties to those of their potentialities, whereas God's particularization takes place in determining the actual. Maimonides also concluded that the first matter was created out of nothing and its creation *ex nihilo* negates any potentiality as opposed to Aristotle's view of co-existence and eternity of the first matter. Therefore, Maimonides concluded that the universe was created from the first matter, which does not necessarily comprise or precede the universe.²⁹⁵ This is on account of his firm stance on the irregularity of the spheres and even the possibility of the creation of heaven before the earth or vice versa. Maimonides still appears to be arguing for the potential and actual theory, except he denied this with respect to God and the first matter. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand asserted God's power and will above every occurrence and hence strongly affirmed a created universe without having to subscribe to natural causation in describing the relation between God and His creations.

It can also be noted that although Maimonides accepted the notion of a created universe, he rejected the Kalam proposition and modified Aristotle's argument of achieving the result of a created universe. Besides, he mentioned that rejecting the eternity of the universe is due to Aristotle's indirect rejection of any miracle, as it holds to the fixed law of physical science. This automatically nullifies Moses' law and the Scriptures.

Nevertheless, Maimonides advocated understanding the created universe as part of reading text in a literal manner. This is where Maimonides seemed to undergo philosophical skepticism. Maimonides did not really wish to demonstrate the truth of

²⁹⁴ Maimonides claimed "It is through the existence of God that all things exist, and it is He who maintains their existence by that process which is called emanation." Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 104

²⁹⁵ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 180

creation ex nihilo. He conformed to the superiority of a created universe above an eternal universe because he could not deny the existence of God's miracle and particularization. However, Maimonides could not deny Aristotle's theory of necessary causation and the process of intellectual emanation within the process of potential and actual.

Maimonides was clearly being analytical in his argument. He not only refuted the theory of *Kalam* but also Aristotle's denial of changes that can be associated with God and the association of potential-actual to the Deity as well. This came about from Aristotle's perception of God as a perfect eternal being that could not accept change.²⁹⁶ Change would only subscribe deficiencies to God. Nonetheless, his rejection is demonstrated in the most sympathetic form.

It can be observed that al-Ghazālī's rebuttal against the philosophical line of argument is clear in this threefold argument; a) motion and halting are accidents and cannot be eternal; b) God's eternal will and power do eternalize the contingent state of the created and do not in return change His will and power to a contingent state; and c) God is not the efficient cause but He is the Agent that intermediates between each creation.

The philosophers claimed there are created beings with no beginning and refuted the argument that all created beings are not devoid of being temporal. Al-Ghazālī laid out three arguments to counter these statements. First, it is illogical to state that eternal beings may possess an end. Thus, the universe will end when the hereafter begins. Secondly, the rotational cycle of the universe may possibly be continuous; however, it needs to be either in even or odd numbers. Hence, it is impossible for the

²⁹⁶ Aristotle's theory of eternity consists of a) eternity of time, motion and locomotion, which subsequently demonstrate God is the first mover; b) changes are impossible to God's perfect being, therefore the law of nature is eternal; c) this must be followed by infinite succession and necessary causation, which demonstrate the first efficient cause.

universe to be eternal. Third, the possibility to possess two numbers, one of which is less than the other and requires other things is unacceptable to an eternal.²⁹⁷

Meanwhile, Maimonides can be seen as reconciling Aristotle's theory of the eternal with that of the theologians, in particular al-Ghazālī. This was done in his attempt to harmonize the philosophical arguments with the Scriptures.

Maimonides refuted Aristotle's eternity of the universe, as it would entail denying miracles and prophecies. Nonetheless, he gathered Aristotle's theory of the eternal supported by Platonic underpinnings and theologians' arguments to develop his theory in parallel with the Scriptures. Despite Maimonides' awareness of the inconsistencies between Aristotle's philosophy and the Scriptures, he attempted to behold the Aristotelian theory objectively and modified the arguments. This clearly reflects Maimonides' respect and sympathy towards Aristotle as a great philosopher.

Maimonides agreed with Aristotle's view of the eternity of motion and prime matter. Nevertheless, instead of claiming that motion and prime matter co-exist with God as Aristotle and Plato believed, Maimonides took the opposite direction. This is equally true if looking at the theory of created motion and prime matter. Maimonides advocated that God created motion and prime matter from nothing. A thing that does not constitute potential is basically considered partially eternal and does not possess beginning.

On the other hand, Maimonides, as an objective and critical scholar, likewise disagreed with Aristotle on the design of the universe and the inactive relation of God with His creations. In arguing the design of the universe, Maimonides agreed with the theory of will and particularization of Muslim theologians, which is particularly apparent in al-Ghazālī's argument. Whereas in the inactive relation as a result of regress causation, Maimonides additionally adopted God's role as the Agent to

²⁹⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 164

reconcile the God of Moses as an Active God with the Active Intellect. This is then expressed in the theory of emanation.

Maimonides' argument of eternity is based on the affirmation of potential and actual and the assertion of God's will. Nevertheless, God's will is based on His wisdom, although al-Ghazālī argued the creation of universe is through God's possibility. Maimonides saw the creation of the universe as being according to physical law, the potential/actual and also Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. Thus, the created universe that Maimonides argued was different from al-Ghazālī. Still, both agreed the universe was created through God's will.

Maimonides contended that it is the form of the physical universe that must have come into existence. Maimonides' argument shows nothing regarding the matter of the universe and does not act as proof of creation *ex nihilo*²⁹⁸. It can be discerned that Maimonides was perplexed in harmonizing biblical verses with Aristotle's proposition of eternity. Maimonides was not completely clear on which theory he preferred, whether Plato's theory of creation of prime matter or creation out of nothing. Perhaps a choice between these is not essential in comparison with considering God's incorporeality. Maimonides advocated there are limits to human understanding of God's design. Man can access the state and events of the spheres and yet cannot perceive their true configuration. This is apparent in his *Guide*²⁹⁹ 2.24, which addresses missing parts of reality that man cannot conceive.

In short, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed with the notion of a created universe. However, they argued from different premises: al-Ghazālī held the premise of the temporality of the universe while Maimonides considered the possibilities of both an eternal and a created universe. It is apparent that both scholars had different

²⁹⁸ Davidson. *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. 201

²⁹⁹ See *The Guide* on the explanation of the difficulty to comprehend the nature and motion of the spheres according to Aristotle's theory. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 199.

orientations and methods of demonstration. Although al-Ghazālī generally seemed to apply a theological dialectical method, he nevertheless adopted philosophical syllogism to demonstrate his premise. On the other hand, Maimonides rejected the *Kalam* explanation, which does not consider two premises in the beginning of the argument. Al-Ghazālī's reason is that it is within the rational paradigm to claim that anything is created except God. Therefore, the need to consider the premise of eternity within the argument is futile. Moreover, the Qur'an clearly states that the universe was created and it should thus not be argued further. Maimonides felt the theologians were wrong and opined that Aristotle's demonstration was proven superior. The difference clearly lies in the two scholars' applications of reason and revelation.

3.3.3 Causality Argument

Al-Ghazālī pointed out the application of the term *sabab* instead of '*illah*'. Here, '*illah*' conceptualizes necessary causation, something that al-Ghazālī refuted. Instead, he argued that every occurrent such as the universe has a cause, and the cause is not intended for anything other than the giver of preponderance, as elaborated in the argument of particularization.

Apparently Maimonides also adhered to the theory of particularization proposed by al-Ghazālī. However, the basis of Maimonides' argument in accepting the notion of cause, better known as '*illah*', distinguishes him from al-Ghazālī. This pertains to its relation with the theory of emanation affirmed by Maimonides and the relation of the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. Maimonides' application of the theory of the intellect is closely related to the theory of potential and actual, which is parallel to Aristotelian thought. Although Maimonides did not associate God with the

state of potential since this would deny His necessary existence, the concept was altogether refuted by al-Ghazālī.

The reason why al-Ghazālī repudiated both states of potential and actual is the negative implication to God’s omnipotence. As mentioned earlier, al-Ghazālī asserted the axiom of God’s free will and particularization in necessitating something. His argument in rejecting this concept is mentioned in his *Tahafut* as a critique of the eternity of the universe.³⁰⁰ This is parallel to Maimonides’ affirmation that potentials subside in matter and that potential necessarily determines the possibility of a succeeding form. Upon criticizing Aristotelianism, al-Ghazālī advocated that possibility is merely a conceptual notion and said “it is right to reduce possibility, impossibility and necessity to intellectual judgment.” Here, al-Ghazālī totally denied that possibility may be subject to the potentialities of matter. Instead, he inferred that possibility is limited to conceptual coherence.³⁰¹ It is observed that al-Ghazālī denied the concept of total potential and reduced all material beings to a complete passive form and a state of indeterminate³⁰² in contrast to Maimonides and other Aristotelian claims mentioned earlier. It is clear al-Ghazālī refuted the theory of potential and actual through outlining the seven features that an ‘accident’ cannot escape: unbinding (*al-infikak*), additional (*zai’d*), hidden (*kamin*), moved (*intiqaal*), subsistent (*qaim*),

³⁰⁰ According to Aristotle’s theory, every composite substance has certain active and passive powers in its elements, which are derived from their forms. Subsequently, it is claimed that every originated thing is preceded by the matter in which it is and nothing can be independent of this matter. It also implies the determination of possibility, whereby the possibility of a thing’s existence was there before it even existed and must be posited in a substratum that is called matter. Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, 48-49

³⁰¹ Al-Ghazālī explained through an example of the possibility of God creating knowledge in an inanimate being. Al-Ghazālī clarified that God cannot create will in a person in the absence of knowledge, since volition implies the seeking of what is known. Thus, God cannot create knowledge in the absence of life. This was noted by al-Ghazālī in his *Iqtisād*: “Impossibilities could not be enacted by power and the existence of a conditioned (*mashrūṭ*) without the condition (*sharṭ*) is unintelligible. The condition of a will is knowledge, and the condition of knowledge is life.” Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 163. See also Blake D. Dutton, “Al-Ghazālī on Possibility and the Critique of Causality” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 10 (2001), 43

³⁰² *Ibid*

nonexistent is eternal (*qidam 'adam*) and created may possess no beginning (*al-hawadits la awwala laha*).

These seven features of accidents prove that substance cannot possibly exist in a potential prior to its creation, and every occurrence exists from the creation of a non-existent. This simultaneously proves that al-Ghazālī strongly advocated the creation of the universe *ex nihilo* as well, indicating that the universe was created out of nothing.

According to al-Ghazālī, every event that occurs is new (created from nothing) and unconnected with its habitual course. Al-Ghazālī believed the world is not an independent universe, a self-subsistent system that develops by itself, has its own laws and that cannot be understood on its own. Al-Ghazālī transferred the mystery of becoming to the mystery of God, who is the cause of all changes in the world, and who at every moment creates the world anew. Things are or are not; God creates them and annihilates them, but they do not become out of each other, there is no passage between being and non-being. Nor is there movement, since a thing that moves is neither here nor there; when it moves, or what we call movement, is *being* at rest at different space-atoms and different time-atoms. It is the denial of potentiality that al-Ghazālī used to refute the Aristotelian idea of eternal matter, whereby potentialities are found in everything that can or will happen. For according to Aristotle, matter must be eternal and cannot have become, since it is, itself, the condition for all becoming.³⁰³

Apart from theories on the potential, Aristotle's argument of the spheres was also evident in Maimonides' thinking that the spheres possess intelligence³⁰⁴ and act as intermediate elements between God and the material world. This leads to the affirmation of the emanating influence of God on the spheres in governing the world

³⁰³ Ibn Rushd. *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. 328

³⁰⁴ Maimonides proved this with a verse from the Scriptures that describe the stars and all the hosts of heaven: "And the hosts of the heaven worship thee" (Nehemiah 9:6). He also demonstrated they possess power to govern the earth: "And to rule over the day and over the night" (Genesis 1:18). See Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 159

below, as the spheres are prescribed with knowledge and the ability to comprehend the influence. The idea of emanative intellect resulting in definite causation and regression is likewise seen in Aristotle's argument.

Maimonides perceived Aristotle's idea as plausible because it demonstrates God's influence on each substance and existence. The influence was further discussed by Maimonides through his theory of the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible and is also intertwined with the theory of potential and actual that infers the intellect inheres in every form before intelligen acts and causes the existence of an object of the intelligible. As mentioned earlier, Maimonides sanctified God from the state of potential; yet he believed that God emanates in every intelligible through His intellect, which seems to contradict the sanctification of God from contingencies.

Obviously Maimonides reiterated the Neoplatonised version of Aristotelianism like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā did. They understood the eternity of the universe as eternal emanation. Maimonides agreed with motion and matter but he perceived them as something created by God and not co-existing with God. This is parallel to Plato who also claimed that God created eternal matter and from that He created the universe. In their opinion, it is thus somehow not possible to create the universe from nothing. Thus, eternal matter is eternal according to its time but it is created in its essence, unlike God who is eternal in both time and essence. This is where the notions of necessary existence by itself and necessary existence by other existence emerge. This is due to their failure to accept that God has power to create something out of nothing. They believed that a thing cannot exist from the essence of the existing thing. However, it requires an agent to necessitate or give existence to the essence in order to make it exist. Thus, the cause must be an existing thing and coexist with its effect.

It is important to note that Maimonides argued differently than Aristotle. Maimonides believed that the spheres and angels are created by God as opposed to

Aristotle who maintained that the spheres co-exist with God. It can be deduced that Aristotle saw no direct influence of God on the creations except for necessary causation. On the other hand, Maimonides admitted it is difficult to deem God as the direct force behind every existence, as this would entail the idea of a corporeal God. Thus, he said that God is the influence of every object that exists and the direct cause can be seen through His angels and spheres. On the contrary, al-Ghazālī felt that God possesses direct power in every creation, which does not entail God being subject to the temporal through His acts of creating and annihilating contingents. This will be discussed later in al-Ghazālī's discourse on the attributes of God.³⁰⁵ Al-Ghazālī absolutely refuted the emanative theory due to errors in understanding God in relation with the universe. The philosophers' understanding of emanation totally degrades God's position as the most sublime power. This is because emanative scholars believed that God inheres created objects, which was totally absurd to al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī found that the reason the philosophers fell into this error is their failure to admit the eternal essential attributes of God in addressing God's relation with the universe.

Maimonides believed in both the nature of science and the power of agents. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī believed the power of God is more prominent than the course of causality. However, al-Ghazālī did not deny the concept of causality altogether as Ibn Rushd did in his *Tahafut al-Tahafut*. However, he denied necessary causation that indirectly repudiates God's omnipotence as the fundamental source in the becoming of a creation.³⁰⁶ In his *Tahafut*, al-Ghazālī explained:

³⁰⁵ Al-Ghazālī affirmed that power is an essential attribute of God, which serves as a layer in differentiating God from contingencies. The attachment of power in a conceptual manner to contingencies thus relates God with His creations. See the subtopic on the essential attributes of God according to Maimonides in 4.1.2.

³⁰⁶ On the other hand, al-Ghazālī's concept of causality is parallel to the Kalam doctrine of atomism, as he advocated the continuity and perpetuity of God's creation as well. This at the same time denies the causal efficacy in created beings.

“We admit that fire is created in such a way that if two similar pieces of cotton were exposed to it, it would burn both, making no distinction between them if they are similar in all respects. Nonetheless, we hold it possible that a prophet be in contact with a flame and not burn, either because of a change in the character of the flame or because of a change in the character of the prophet. There might arise either from God or from the angels a property in the flame, which could confine its heat within its own body, preventing it from going further. Thus, it would retain its heat and its effect would not go beyond it. Alternatively, there might arise in the body of the person some property, which does not restrict him from being flesh and blood but does protect him from the effect of the flame”³⁰⁷

The above text suggests that al-Ghazālī did not reject the physical science that occurs due to natural causes. For instance, fire will burn two pieces of cotton similarly. Al-Ghazālī accepted the reaction as a result of an external factor. Nevertheless, he also emphasized its created nature, as he mentioned that miracles given to the prophets contradict natural causes.

In short, al-Ghazālī accepted natural science altogether but with the belief that God overpowers everything and has the power to create something opposed to nature. Here, al-Ghazālī referred to God’s direct interference in every existence that takes place in the universe. Maimonides also held that God possesses will to create and His will changes according to His wisdom. Meanwhile, in explaining Aristotle, Maimonides noted that although Aristotle believed in necessary causation from the first cause, he also believed that God is pleased, satisfied and delighted with that which necessarily derives existence from Him and it is impossible for God to have a different wish for existence.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, ed & trans Marmura, 171

³⁰⁸ Maimonides, 190

3.3.4 The Particularization Argument

The discourse of particularization between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides is perhaps one of the most important discussions in this study, as it bridges the two scholars' stances on the creation of the universe according to some researchers.³⁰⁹

Al-Ghazālī argued on the arbitrariness of the spheres. Likewise, Maimonides also pointed out the irregularity in the movement of the spheres and their design, which led him to affirm God's particularization.

According to al-Ghazālī, God particularizes every event that takes place in this universe. Contingencies possess possible existence, where God acts as the particularizer in every event. Thus, it can be observed that God's will is inherent within every occurrence. Meanwhile, according to Maimonides, apart from God's will every occurrence still relies on necessary causation, in which the process of actualization of potentials transpires.

It can be observed that Maimonides only developed the theory of particularization owing to the arbitrariness of the spheres, as he could not provide a better proposition regarding the divergences in the spheres' movement and design. This is what al-Ghazālī rebutted in his *Iqtīṣād* similar to the claim advocated by the philosophers. It is evident that Maimonides departed from the philosophers, particularly Aristotle, and adopted the theory of particularization instead. He even admitted when discussing the theologians' propositions of a created universe that this is 'the best argument' of the theologians. Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides seemingly agreed on the general concept of particularization but differed on its conceptualization.

³⁰⁹ The claim appears to relate the basis of particularization which originated from al-Juwayni and was later developed by al-Ghazālī and modified by Maimonides. See Herbert A. Davidson. *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. 202.

Al-Ghazālī said particularization takes place in every occurrence while Maimonides only assigned the particularization theory to the grand scheme of the sublunary design.

It can also be noted that al-Ghazālī's model of particularization still holds a similar core argument with al-Juwaynī in affirming God's total free will. This is obvious as al-Ghazālī was a student of al-Juwaynī. Meanwhile, what Maimonides believed may be somewhat different from the former scholars. Although the influence and similarity seem apparent, his argument however follows the Aristotelian foundation of the existence of potential and actual, which totally denies God's free will and at the same time contradicts al-Ghazālī.

What contradicts the theory of particularization is actually the theory of possibility and necessity. The philosophers argued that every occurrence exists necessarily through the process of actualization of potentials, which eventually leads to necessary causation. However, on the basis of God's will and particularization, al-Ghazālī and the theologians argued contrarily. Al-Ghazālī affirmed that all occurrences are of possible qualities. Possibilities are acquired by the intellect as possible. Thus, possibilities require a preponderant to determine their existence and design.

The philosophers however viewed the theologians' failure to admit causality as part of their incompetency to understand the nature of possibility, necessity and impossibilities.³¹⁰ According to the philosophers, as mentioned by Maimonides in his *Guide*, the theologians merely applied imagination to dictate what is possible and impossible. This is apparent in Maimonides' remark "In many instances these theologians were guided by their imagination and thought they were following the dictates of the intellect."³¹¹ Maimonides neither undermined the theologians'

³¹⁰ Wolfson. *The Philosophy of the Kalam.*, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1976, 444

³¹¹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed* 110. Maimonides also quoted al-Farabi who argued that the theologians only apply imagination and in other instances ordinary common sense to perceive the possibility of a thing. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed* 128. To clarify, Maimonides assumed the theologians' view "This is exactly the difference between us, that which actually exists, has,

credibility nor supported the philosophers' statement against the theologians. He believed there is a sturdy proposition behind the theologians' view on the theory of particularization. Although Maimonides did not deny the theologians' argument for impossibilities, he was actually being skeptical.

Prior to that, al-Ghazālī had actually pointed out the philosophers' failure to accept God's will and particularization. Al-Ghazālī's perception of possibility is that what is possible in accordance with the mind and intellect. However, al-Ghazālī did not reject impossibilities of the habitual course of things with respect to God's power and will, for instance, the feeling of heat instead of cold when one touches ice and vice versa. Although natural events occur constantly through the execution of God's plan (*SunnatulLah*), it must be understood that concomitant is not always a condition as the philosophers persistently affirmed in the theory of necessary causation.³¹² Thus the concomitant (*lazimat*) at times diverges and does not occur to its condition, which will eventually break the habitual course of things if God wills and particularizes it.

Returning to the argument on particularization, al-Ghazālī clearly highlighted two main failures with those claims that reject the theory of particularization.

First, there is a misconception of the theory of substance, which the philosophers understood as possessing forms and matter (*surah* and *hayula*).³¹³ This concept subsequently led philosophers to the establishment of necessary causation, which denies the theory of God's will and particularization. To the philosophers, God's design in the natural cause is a perfect design, thus God's will and particularization is not necessary anymore. Nevertheless, it is different in the case of

according to my view been produced by the will of the Creator and not by necessity, just as it has been created with that special property it might have been created with any other property, unless the impossibility which you postulate be proved by a logical demonstration" Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 131. It is clear that the theologians argued on the possibility of everything except that which is proven to be impossible.

³¹² Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*. 163

³¹³ Al-Ghazālī. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 106

Maimonides. Although he accepted the necessary causation of the philosophers, he accepted particularization as well. This is apparent when he claimed that God is the cause as well as the agent. As mentioned above, his reason for accepting particularization was the arbitrary design of the spheres that he could not possibly link to the causational theory. Thus Maimonides' position is somewhat different from the philosophers, except that he still affirmed necessary causation. Hence, if one views Maimonides' proposition in accordance with al-Ghazālī's argument, Maimonides' proposition is unacceptable as it demonstrates contradiction.

Hence it is observable that particularization for Maimonides is different from al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite. For the Ash'arite believed that particularization acts to distinguish one thing either from a similar or the opposite one without any determination by any wisdom in the thing itself. Thus, a Particularizing Agent, namely God, is compulsory in causing the existence of an object. Philosophers on the other hand conceived particularization in two forms as adduced by Ibn Rushd in his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*³¹⁴, as either determined by the product itself, i.e. the final cause, for according to them there is no quantity or quality in any being that is not determined by wisdom, or it is determined by the First Maker and Creator.³¹⁵ Therefore, Maimonides' concept of particularization which Davidson³¹⁶ argued to be originating from the *kalam* proposition perhaps seems to be more coherent with Ibn Rushd's argument of providence.

³¹⁴ Al-Qurtubi, Abu al-Walid Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibn Rushd. *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. (Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2014), 107

³¹⁵ First, the argument of *'ināyah* suggests that the nature and its order are definitely governed by knowledge and wisdom. This argument encourages people to investigate the creations of God. This leads to the second argument of *ikhтира*' which adduces different levels of human are based on their intellectual activity. The final argument by Ibn Rushd is the theory of movement by Aristotle. It claims that the universe moves along with some eternal movement that does not move and differs from others. Pines. *The Philosophic Sources of The Guide of the Perplexed*. cxxx

³¹⁶ See Davidson. *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. 197. This argument has also been mentioned in Chapter One of this study in the discussion on the background of the study.

Secondly, Maimonides and the philosophers' failure to understand God's particularization lies in their extreme emphasis on the unity of God in exalting Him. As mentioned in the discussion on al-Ghazālī's argument of particularization, he strongly highlighted the attribute of will intertwined with the theory of particularization. In contrary, he negated that God possesses any attributes. Maimonides however expressed will as the relation of God with His creations. Maimonides perceived that God wills with His essence. This understanding, according to al-Ghazālī, will yield error, as it implies occurrences to God's eternal essence. Thus, the layer of attributes refuted by Maimonides in fact distinguishes his conception of will from that of al-Ghazālī.

In short, although both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed on particularization through God's will, their conception of particularization totally differed. Al-Ghazālī affirmed that God is only an agent while Maimonides believed that God is the Agent and the Cause of every existence.

Al-Ghazālī agreed that God is the Particularizing Agent who possesses eternal will with which He preponders occurrences. Possibilities of all occurrences completely depend on His will and power. The concomitant does not necessarily occur in accordance with the course of nature because God's will and power supersede every possibility. On the other hand, Maimonides believed that God is the Agent as well as the Cause of the universe. It is clear that the main reason for adopting the theory of particularization is his affirmation of the arbitrariness of the spherical design and also mainly his acceptance of God's miracle and the created universe. He affirmed God possesses will but he did not deny the necessary causation that transpires within the process of actualization of potentials. The complexity and oddity in his establishment of the argument is perhaps due to his attempt to harmonize philosophical thought with

the Scriptures. This certainly reflects his perplexity and the perplexity of his conception, which he himself adduced.

Concluding Remarks

According to the above discussion, there are basically three main arguments in the discourse on God's existence, namely proofs of God's existence, God's existence in relation to the universe, and the relation of God with His creations through causality and particularization.

In proving God's existence, it is observed that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides affirmed God's necessary existence. They diverged when categorizing existence itself. Al-Ghazālī affirmed God is the only necessary existent. Maimonides nevertheless adduced another category, namely necessary existence on account of an external force in reference to the universe.

This leads to the second discussion on the relation of God with the universe. The premise is that God is the only eternal being and beings other than God are thus considered temporal. For every temporal being there must be a cause and therefore the universe possesses a cause. On the other hand, Maimonides considered both premises of an eternal and a created universe and found the propositions of an eternal universe to be more substantial than of a created universe. This was advocated by theologians and the propositions successfully demonstrated God's incorporeality and unity. However, Maimonides ultimately found the theory of a created universe to be closer to the Scriptures than the eternal universe. Nevertheless, he did not totally accept creation *ex nihilo* but adopted Plato's theory of creation from eternal matter.

Maimonides' acceptance of Aristotle's proposition of an eternal universe is evident in his discussion on the concept of causality. Maimonides fully accepted necessary causation and emanation in establishing the relationship between God and

the universe. Al-Ghazālī, in contrast, strongly refuted necessary causation in describing the relation of creation with God. He accepted habitual causation but nonetheless affirmed God's power as being supreme to natural causation. In addition, al-Ghazālī refuted the concept of causation by rejecting the concept of the potential that is inherent in every substance.

Alternatively, al-Ghazālī highlighted the theory of particularization in affirming God's will in creation. Likewise, Maimonides too accepted God's particularization. Nevertheless, he differed from al-Ghazālī in two ways. First, Maimonides' acceptance of the theory of potential and actual seems irrelevant despite accepting God's particularization. Second, his negation of the attribute of will as additional to God's essence leads to further error when attributing the relation of creation with will. Thus, it is noted that Maimonides only held the particularization theory at the surface of understanding the arbitrariness of the spherical design.

In sum, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides affirmed that God's existence is necessary existence. However, they majorly differed in terms of relating God with creation. Although Maimonides claimed that God created the universe and He particularized the spherical design, he nevertheless upheld the theory of potential and actual, which entails necessary causation and emanation of God. His complexity in understanding the cosmological argument perhaps stems from his attempt to explain philosophical propositions in the Scriptures. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī absolutely upheld God's will and power in understanding God's relation with the universe and strongly refuted the philosophical propositions of dualism in eternal existence. Perhaps al-Ghazālī's understanding of cosmological order is more plausible in comprehending the relationship between God and His creation.

3.4 Anthropomorphism According to al-Ghazālī

The anthropomorphic rationale emerged due to the weakness in human thought regarding the Divine.³¹⁷ The nature of recognizing God in each individual human eventually leads to imagining God's essence. As a result, God's divinity is degraded by the anthropomorphic practice of thinking.

It is argued that the Jewish influence on Muslims upon anthropomorphizing God is obvious where prophetic traditions refer to Adam having been created in the image of God, which has illuminated Muslims' thinking.³¹⁸ In addition, Quranic verses inescapably carry anthropomorphic forms of God; such verses are commonly known among Muslim scholars as *Ayat Mutasyabihat* (inexplicit verses). However, al-Ghazālī did not mention the term *mutasyabihat* in his writings in direct reference to verses stated in the Quran. In fact, he only addressed verses without coining any terms to these verses. Al-Ghazālī argued that *tasyabuh*, as in the likeness of God to man, does not necessarily indicate likeness on the same scale. The verses are only mentioned metaphorically and analogically as part of the immense Quranic literature.

In addressing this matter, al-Ghazālī's deliberated anthropomorphism in the first section of *Kitab al-Qawā'id* and *Iqtisād* in the chapter on God's essence. He began by explaining God's incorporeality and eternity, which free Him from any substance and accidents. In ontological discourse, God's divine essence is the most critically disputed among philosophers and theologians. Al-Ghazālī had an important

³¹⁷ Al-Faruqi, Ismail Raji. *Islam dan kepercayaan lain. (Islam and other faith)*. (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Bhd, 2008)

³¹⁸ It is mentioned that Abdullah bin Saba' was a Jewish convert responsible for instilling an understanding of an anthropomorphic form of God into Islam. His ill disposition in conversion was apparent in deviating the religion by imposing the divinity of Ali, which was later culminated in the Shiite doctrine in some of its sects like al-Bayaniyyah, al-Mughiriyyah, al-Mansuriyyah, al-Yunusiyyah, al-Hishamiyyah and many others, who were influenced by Ibn Saba' s corporeal thought. Shah, 1997, p.319

role in rebutting the philosophers' position on God's being a *jawhar*, which differs from the Islamic viewpoint.

3.4.1 Proofs of God's Incorporeality

In countering the anthropomorphism of God in Islam, al-Ghazālī initially highlighted the essence of God, which does not constitute a material body, substance, space or any form of accident. First, al-Ghazālī affirmed that God's essence should not be a substance that is required to consume space (*mutahayyiz*); rather, He should be sanctified from any space limitation, as space is inevitably associated with motion and rest. Motion and rest are both temporal and therefore God cannot be associated with space or temporal essence as He is eternal. Moreover, if substance is considered eternal, the universe's substance may also be deemed eternal, which would defeat the notion of God as the only eternal Creator.³¹⁹

Secondly, al-Ghazālī further denied any bodily figure from God's essence, since a body is composed of different substances. If substances are linked to time, a body certainly expresses temporal essence, something impossible for God. Likewise, substance is inseparable from division, composition, motion, rest, form and quantity, all of which are characteristics of originated phenomena. Besides, the term body must comply with characteristics such as big, small, short and tall, which cannot describe God. His power as the Creator would be limited by designating a body unto Him within our restricted intellectual parameters.³²⁰

Next, al-Ghazālī emphasized the absurdity of associating accidents with God. A body is originated and therefore cannot be part of God. If God involves accidents

³¹⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 1, 164

³²⁰ *Ibid*

and bodies, He would not be eternal whereas it is impossible for God to have been created. The conclusion is that God is a self-existing being who is free from substance, accidents and bodies that resemble created beings.³²¹

Finally, in affirming God's incorporeality, according to al-Ghazālī one should detach Him from being limited to any direction, because directions can only pertain to created beings that God created with extremities such as left and right. Al-Ghazālī denied directions from God in denying a bodily form of God that may lead one to think God has a figurative nature as humans do. Directions require positing God to a definite place, which is certainly impossible for God. Besides, directions were created by humans, because when God created humans there were no terms indicating directions. If God is said to reside above or below, it may somehow illustrate the existence of a head and legs, referring to a bodily figure.³²²

According to the propositions above, it can be deduced that al-Ghazālī renounced four basic categories from God's essence, namely space, body, accidents and directions. This is in parallel with his argument that God's existence is not limited to space or body and differs from other existences. Al-Ghazālī's elaboration on this proposition is mentioned in the beginning to demonstrate the importance of adopting a correct understanding of God's essence.

3.4.2 Interpretation of Anthropomorphic Verses

Al-Ghazālī addressed anthropomorphic verses that refer to acts of *istiwa'* and walking, and body figures like hands and fingers in several of his texts: *Iḥyā'*, *Iqtisād*, *Fayṣal al-Tafrīqah* and *Qānūn al-Ta'wīl*. This is due to the rising debate during his time on

³²¹ *Ibid*

³²² *Ibid*, 164-165

anthropomorphic verses, which subsequently led to the segregation of a number of sectarians.³²³

In his discussion on anthropomorphism, al-Ghazālī strongly underscored God’s incorporeality by repudiating that God’s essence has weaknesses, dependencies and deficiencies. Alternatively, al-Ghazālī laid out three ways of interpreting the anthropomorphic aspects of God along with three groups of people respectively.

One is a literal way of understanding the verses without interpreting their meanings. This approach leads to understanding God in bodily form, as the Mujassima believed.

The second way is to consign meanings of anthropomorphic verses to God without attempting to interpret the verses or subjecting God to figurative forms. This is because since it was not practiced by the Prophet’s companions, questioning meanings is impermissible. According to Malik bin Anas (711-795) regarding *istiwa’* (God being seated upon the throne), “*Istiwa’* is known, believing in it is compulsory, its way is unknown and asking about it is *bid’ah* (innovation, not practiced by the Prophet).” This group of believers includes the layman.³²⁴

Third, al-Ghazālī explicated the method of allegorical interpretation for those who doubt verses and cannot resist questioning the original verses. Those categorized in this group are feared to be slipping away from their creedal belief if they do not apply allegorical interpretation to the anthropomorphic verses. However, there are

³²³ Due to the differences in interpretation among scholars of Islamic thought, the discourse on God’s nature led to the emergence of major sects, namely the Mu’tazilite, Ashairite and Hanabilites. The Mu’tazilite were inclined towards more rational allegory compared to the Ash’airite. The Ash’airite held a middle stance between accepting literal meaning while interpreting allegorically to avoid transgressing His Divinity. While the Mu’tazilite totally negated the verses from being associated with God similar to their negation of the attributes of God. As for the literalists, they are the Hanabilites and Mujassimah. The Hanabilites accepted the verses in their literal form but nevertheless rejected that God is corporeal, possessing a body like humans. Meanwhile, the Mujassimah accepted God in a bodily form, which is considered heretic in mainstream Islam.

³²⁴ Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad. *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah Baina al-Islām wa al-Zindiqah*. (n.p.p: n.p, 1993), 48

regulations for practicing allegorical interpretations so as to avoid deviations in understanding the original meanings of verses.³²⁵

In his treatise *Iljam al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam*, al-Ghazālī stated there are seven steps to understanding anthropomorphic verses on God in their original form. First is exoneration (*taqdis*), which is to purify God from any physical attachment. The second step is affirmation (*tasdiq*), which entails affirming and truly believing the sayings of Prophet Muhammad. The third step is to acknowledge one's inability (*al-i'tiraf bi al-'ajz*), which is to admit one's weaknesses and limits in apprehending and interpreting verses as it is simply beyond one's capacity. Fourth is silence (*sukut*); that is, being silent and not questioning or obsessing over debating, which may eventually lead to serious risk to one's faith and vulnerability of creed. Fifth, abstinence (*al-imsak*), is to not alter or replace expressions with other language. One is urged to maintain the original form without changing the verses by adding or removing parts or translating them into other languages. Al-Ghazālī recommended six key things that should be avoided: i) explaining (*tafsīr*), ii) interpreting figuratively (*ta'wil*), iii) altering (*taṣrīf*), iv) making logical assumptions (*tafrī'*), v) joining what is separated (*jam'*), and vi) separating what is joined together (*tafrī'*). The sixth stage in understanding anthropomorphic verses on God is restraint (*al-kaff*), meaning to abstain oneself from delving intensely into these verses and from pondering over them. Lastly, yield to those who specialize in this (*al-taslim li ahlih*): leave the discussion to scholars due to the limited capacity of the layman's knowledge.³²⁶

From the seven steps demonstrated above, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī's argument on perceiving anthropomorphic verses without interpretation is clear and comprehensive. In fact, these steps serve a very concise guideline for the layman.

³²⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah Baina al-Islām wa al-Zindiqah*, 49

³²⁶ Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad. *Iljam al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam*. In *Majmu'ah al-Rasail al-Imam al-Ghazālī*. Tahqiq Yasir Abu Sulaiman Abu Syadi. (Egypt: Dar al-Tawfiqiyah li al-Turath, 2011), 337

Despite having affirmed methods of understanding verses in their original form, al-Ghazālī nevertheless mentioned the need to interpret several Quranic verses metaphorically. However, al-Ghazālī said that not just any verse can be simply interpreted. He also proposed five levels of existence that one needs to understand before deciding to interpret a verse analogically.

The five levels of existence are mentioned in *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah* and are known as the ontological (*wujud al-dhati*), sensorial (*hissi*), imaginative (*khayali*), noetic (*'aqli*) and analogous (*shabahi*) existences. Ontological existence refers to existences that are clear and concise and do not require any interpretation. Sensorial existence requires one to feel with their senses. Meanwhile, imaginative existence may have happened in the past and requires using one's imaginative faculty to perceive it. Noetic existence is where one needs to use their intellectual faculty to perceive the meaning of something, such as when a verse mentions 'hand' in reference to God and it is not possible to perceive it ontologically or through the senses or imagination. Thus, the intellectual faculty must be applied in order to understand the meaning behind 'God's hand.' Analogous existence is when for instance one attributes anger to God. In reality, anger causes increased blood pressure and potentially sickness to a person. However, this is impossible for God. Thus, God's anger must be interpreted differently from human anger, such as God's wrath serving as punishment of His servants.³²⁷

It is only allowed to initiate interpretation if a verse cannot be understood at the first three levels. This suggests that al-Ghazālī encouraged interpreting underlying meanings of anthropomorphic verses that cannot be attributed to God in a literal sense only by those who possess the knowledge.

³²⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah Baina al-Islām wa al-Zindiqah*, 33-39

Therefore, al-Ghazālī affirmed that it is important to renounce (*tanzih*) that God’s essence and attributes have any weakness or deficiency. In *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazālī mentioned that if certain verses were to be understood in a literal sense, it would entail impossibility (for instance figurative forms of God). Thus, whatever indicates impossibilities regarding God is impossible to be left un-interpreted.³²⁸

Al-Ghazālī interpreted *istiwa’* in Qur’an 41:11³²⁹ as the notion of dominion and power. He emphasized that it does not rest upon a body, as a body constitutes substance and accidents, which are impossible of God. If the position of God is postulated in *‘arsy* as mentioned in the verse of *istiwa’*, it must be concluded that God resides in a specific place and it contradicts other verses in the Quran. In other verses, al-Ghazālī demonstrated that God’s position is undeterminable, e.g. “and wherever ye are He is with you.” Thus, the verse above denotes the meaning of comprehension and knowledge.³³⁰

Another anthropomorphic verse mentioned in the prophetic tradition that carries a meaning is “The heart of a believer lies between two fingers of the Merciful (God).”³³¹ It is impossible to relate fingers to God, as God will consequently be associated with having a bodily nature. A further account of the prophetic tradition mentions the hand of God: “The right stone (*al-hajar al-aswad*) is the right hand of God on earth,”³³² which connotes the meaning of veneration and honor.³³³ One hadith mentions,

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger as saying that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, thus stated: “I am near to the thought of My servant as he thinks about Me, and I am with him as he remembers Me. And if he remembers Me in his heart, I also remember him in My

³²⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 166

³²⁹ “Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth, ‘Come both willingly or unwillingly. They both said, ‘We come willingly.’” (Qur’an 41: 11)

³³⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 165

³³¹ Narrated by Muslim in his *Saḥīḥ*. (2654)

³³² Narrated by Ibn Khuzaimah in his *Saḥīḥ* (2737) and al-Tabrani in his *Awṣaṭ* (563).

³³³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 165

Heart, and if he remembers Me in assembly I remember him in assembly, better than his (remembrance), and if he draws near Me by the span of a palm, I draw near him by the cubit, and if he draws near Me by the cubit I draw near him by the space (covered by) two hands. And if he walks towards Me, I rush towards him.”³³⁴

The above hadith appears to reveal the act of God walking and the intimacy between God and humans over distance. Nonetheless, al-Ghazālī interpreted God’s intimacy in terms of His blessings on humans.³³⁵

Despite making allegorical interpretations of verses, al-Ghazālī affirmed the Hanbalite and Ash‘arite’s affirmative approach of interpreting verses, who maintained that the verses are as intended by God Himself. Moreover, he was seen to follow the steps of traditionalists in sustaining the attributes of God, namely power (*qudrah*), will (*iradah*), knowledge (*‘ilm*), life (*hayy*), hearing (*sama’*), seeing (*basar*) and speaking (*kalam*). Understanding anthropomorphism also led al-Ghazālī to highlight the importance of distinguishing the attributes of God and humans in contrast to the Mu’tazilite who negated attributes.

It can be summed that al-Ghazālī only accepted two interpretations out of the three he laid out. He acknowledged the second and third approaches and rejected the first, which affirms an anthropomorphic understanding of God. Meanwhile, the first two interpretations that consign meaning to God and employ allegorical interpretation are suggested for the layman and the learned, respectively. The bottom line is that al-Ghazālī strongly affirmed the importance of renouncing God from any figure, distance or direction. This category pertains to the layman and the followers of the early companions. They would not question the meaning of each verse but would rest it upon God as is. In contrary, the other group regarded people who are compelled to question the literal connotations. To avoid falling into understanding things

³³⁴ Sahih Muslim. *Bab al-Hatsts ‘ala dhikrillāh* (Chapter: Encouragement to Remember Allah). Book 48 Hadith 1. 2675.

³³⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-I’tiqad*, 124

figuratively, it becomes essential for these people to perceive allegorically according to scholars' interpretations.

Concluding Remarks

In proving God's incorporeality, al-Ghazālī strongly emphasized sanctifying God's essence from possessing a bodily form. He negated ascribing God's essence to substance, accidents, space and directions, which would entail perceiving God in figurative forms. This was also demonstrated in the proof of God's existence, where according to al-Ghazālī, God's existence is not attached to space or body, and thus He is free from any form of substance like other contingencies.

Meanwhile, in interpreting anthropomorphic verses, al-Ghazālī clearly distinguished three different approaches. First is to understand verses literally, which al-Ghazālī believed leads to anthropomorphic understanding. Second is the layman approach, which is through consigning meaning to God. Besides, he also presented seven steps to follow in comprehending anthropomorphic verses. Third is the learned man's approach to allegorical interpretation. However, in making allegorical interpretations, al-Ghazālī placed boundaries. Not all verses should be interpreted allegorically. Only those verses that cannot be understood through ontological, sensorial and imaginative approaches may be interpreted allegorically, for instance the hands of God, which al-Ghazālī interpreted as honor and veneration.

Overall, al-Ghazālī appears to strike a middle ground in the theological views between the literalists and those who totally negated those verses from God. It can be concluded that al-Ghazālī accepted the original verse of the anthropomorphic verses for those who do not dwell upon the meaning of verses. This category includes the layman and the followers of the early companions of the Prophet, who would not

question the meaning of each verse but would rather leave the verses to God as they are. In contrary, the other group comprises those who are compelled to question literal meanings. To avoid anthropomorphic understanding, it is hence essential for thinkers to perceive verses allegorically.

3.5 Anthropomorphism According to Maimonides

Anthropomorphism is a common phenomenon in all primitive and ancient polytheistic religions. It is apparent in the majority of Jewish literary sources and mainly in the Hebrew Bible. Yet no material representation of the deity should be accepted as a major axiom of Judaism, as it is neither possible nor permissible. To address this contradiction, Maimonides held that it required to consider and understand every anthropomorphic expression. It should be asked whether the expression is a naive personification of God or a sort of religious awareness that entails corporeal forms or allegorical expressions. It is certainly an enquiry between a conscious and unconscious mind in apprehending verses. With respect to demonstrating the proofs of God's incorporeality and interpreting anthropomorphic verses, Maimonides' stance is evident mainly in his two magnum opuses, *The Guide* and *Mishneh Torah*.

3.5.1 Proofs of God's Incorporeality

With regards to God's incorporeality, Maimonides strictly denied any form of corporeality of God including apprehending God through anthropomorphic demonstration. Maimonides strongly affirmed that God is unique and there is none like God; God is not a body and has no likeness to others in any way; and each attribute

must be understood equivocally.³³⁶ Maimonides true dedication in affirming that each regular person must be taught a fundamental belief that God is one and incorporeal is apparent in both his texts at the beginning of *Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide*. Maimonides' emphasis on the fundamental belief of God according to his *Mishneh Torah* as well what was uncommon in other *Mishneh* writing systems, demonstrates his true intention to introduce the significance of this belief system to all Jews.³³⁷

In *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides delivered a fundamental argument in understanding God's unity and incorporeality. He claimed that if deities were plural, it would be necessary for them to be in physical form, since objects can only be distinguished through their material accidents. However, God cannot possess physical form. If He had physical form, God would have limits -- which is impossible as God is the most perfect and infinite Being. Thus, He must be one and incorporeal.³³⁸

Meanwhile, in *The Guide*, it is apparent that Maimonides demonstrated his argument from Aristotle's perspective.³³⁹ God's incorporeality is demonstrated through the threefold argument of God's existence, unity and incorporeality. He argued the existence of God in conjunction with an agent who sets the spheres in motion by outlining four possibilities of the Agent: either i) corporeality, or ii) incorporeality, or iii) a force distributed throughout all spheres, or iv) an indivisible force from the spheres.

³³⁶ Maimonides. 38

³³⁷ Other Jewish sages did not emphasize the belief in God as they claimed that belief is a state of mind and not action, which does not require emphasis as when one acts upon the law when one would be considered a believer. However, Maimonides affirmed that one needs to work to internalize his belief system and make it part of his conscious process. See http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/682956/jewish/Mishneh-Torah.htm. 4 September 2016

³³⁸ Refer to Chapter 1. Book of Knowledge. *Mishneh Torah*. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/682956/jewish/Mishneh-Torah.htm. 4 September 2016

³³⁹ As quoted by Harry Wolfson on Aristotle's argument in his *Metaphysic XII*, 8, 1074a, 33-34 "If the Creator were a body...His power would be finite...but...the power of God is infinite and incessant, seeing that the celestial sphere is continuous in its motion, and so since God is not a body, there cannot accrue to Him any of the accidents of bodies.." Harry Wolfson, *Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God*, 115

The first case of corporeality is inadmissible. If the movement agent of the spheres were a corporeal being, it would therefore cause motion to itself in moving the spheres. Hence, an infinite number of agents would be required before the spheres were set in motion. The third argument proposes that a force disseminated throughout all spheres is impossible. If the spheres were corporeal, they would succumb to being finite and motion would be finite, which is against Aristotle's proposition of the perpetuity of motion. The fourth argument is on the indivisibility of force that causes motion to be accidental. Since accidental motion would cause motion to the agent, once it moves accidental motion would be finite -- something not admissible of the agent.³⁴⁰

Hence, Maimonides affirmed the second argument is construed to be the condition of the Prime Mover of the spheres, God. The Cause of the spheres must be incorporeal in order to be eternal and infinite. It must also neither be divisible nor changeable, nor must it experience accidental moves. While it is difficult to positively conceive God's nature, it is logical to know that a first cause must exist. Consequently, through studying the created order, it is possible to gain knowledge on the effect of divine activity. Fulfilling the commandments is a means of developing one's capacities and dispositions, to enable understanding the philosophical truths of the Hebrew Bible.

This suggests Maimonides' strong disproof of God's dependence on bodily forms to sustain His existence. God's actions are evidently accomplished by His essence and not by any organs or physical forces connected to organs. Moreover, Maimonides added that the cause of God's will, action and knowledge can only be accomplished with His essence. Thus, regarding belief in God's incorporeality, Maimonides attempted to prove that God is not susceptible to affection, emotion, matter and form.

³⁴⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 150

3.5.2 Interpretation of Anthropomorphic Verses

For a great many people, understanding God, the commandments, and human beings' relationship with God depends heavily on the use of rich, descriptive language. God is often described figuratively with fingers, hands, etc. Similar to other medieval philosophers, Maimonides held that the same truth could be represented and conveyed by different means and in accordance with different levels of sophistication of understanding. For certain mentality level with no capacity to understand metaphysical principles and demonstrative proofs, it is necessary to hear the truth about God through easily comprehensible idioms. Alternatively, this could additionally be articulated in terms of philosophical understanding.

Maimonides' attempt to enhance the philosophical approach towards the Scriptures is evident in his emphasis on equivocal interpretation, otherwise known as homonymous predication.³⁴¹ He suggested undertaking an allegorical approach to perceiving the anthropomorphic verses in the Scripture.³⁴² His extensive allegorical interpretations cover 49 chapters of the first volume of *The Guide of the Perplexed*, which is more than half of the entire volume. This demonstrates Maimonides' main concern was to repudiate anthropomorphic understanding by allegorical understanding. It is noted that Maimonides applied a method of biblical allegorical interpretation introduced by Philo and originated from the Stoics.³⁴³ Besides, Maimonides also

³⁴¹ Maimonides distinguished between the term equivocal, univocal and amphibolous based on Aristotle's categorization in his treatise on the Art of Logic. Maimonides defined equivocation as a term that has no likeness at all between two things, unless for the shared word. In contrary to equivocal, univocal refers to something that constitutes similar essential properties, such as heat is an essential property of fire and the sun of fire. Another term that may seem similar to equivocal and univocal is amphibolous, a term applied to two things because of the accidents they have in common. For instance, whiteness of a dog and cat is considered an accident.

³⁴² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 6

³⁴³ Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 38.

seemed very much preoccupied with reiterating Onkelos' interpretation.³⁴⁴ Maimonides found that only a limited number of terms are applied to God in a figurative sense, as some are rephrased in Onkelos' Targum and some are left to literal adaptation.³⁴⁵ Onkelos' balanced approach to denying God's corporeality and literal interpretation that does not suggest corporeality, perhaps enticed Maimonides to follow his interpretation.

In his treatise, Maimonides reiterated Onkelos' interpretation regarding anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible when God declared His descent into the world. In his Targum, Onkelos paraphrased the verse "The Lord will come down" to "And God manifested Himself".³⁴⁶ It is also possible Onkelos might have signified *Elohim* are angels instead of God, because it was usual practice for the Prophets to relate the word 'angel' to God, as though God Himself spoke to the prophets. A verse that demonstrates God's movement and indicates space is: "The Lord is nigh (*karab*) unto all of them that call upon him" (Psalms 145: 18). It is interpreted as an intimate spiritual approach, for instance to the attainment of some knowledge but not the approach in space.³⁴⁷ God's position is also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place (*mekomo*)" (Ezra 3: 12), where *makom* has a figurative meaning and the verse may be paraphrased as "Blessed be the Lord according to the exalted nature of His existence."³⁴⁸ Directions like ascending and descending should not be subscribed to space but rather to God's absolute existence,

³⁴⁴ Onkelos (35-120) was a Jewish scholar who was well-versed in all Roman and Greek culture. He was a member of the Roman royal family who converted to Judaism. His masterpiece, Targum of Onkelos, is an exposition of interpretation of the Torah. See www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11712-onkelos.

³⁴⁵ For instance, in Genesis 46:4 Jacob's vision of the night is translated literally, which does not lead to corporeal understanding because vision and dreams were generally regarded as mental operations, devoid of objective reality. See M. Friedlander. 'Preface' in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, xlv

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 36

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 28

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 103

greatness and power.³⁴⁹ Therefore God's position reflecting His existence is incomparable.

In another verse, the word throne is mentioned, signifying a place for God "Thus said the Lord, the heaven is My throne and the earth My footstool" (Isaiah 66: 1). According to Maimonides, this illustrates His greatness, glory and omnipotence.³⁵⁰ He argued that the images of the Prophets were created by God and must therefore be accepted as they were surely those who reject a corporeal God. Additional examples of organs of touch are in the verses "the hand of the Lord" (Exod 9: 3), "the work of thy fingers" (Psalms 8: 4), "the arm of the Lord (Isaiah xxx: 27). According to Maimonides, these are not to be interpreted figuratively but must be understood as part of God's actions.

Maimonides affirmed that the equivocal interpretation of the Scriptures is clear in every verse that describes God. For instance, he explicitly described God's attributes as subscribed by the Torah with the Talmudic principle "*The Torah speaks in the language of man*" to be similar qualities being described of God and all beings, which was discussed above as part of understanding homonymous or equivocal predication.

Maimonides held that anthropomorphic verses should be interpreted in a deeper sense. Maimonides quoted the verse from Proverbs 25:11 to show a good simile: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in vessels of silver." Maimonides interpreted that as 'a deeper sense of the words of the holy law are pearls and the literal apprehension of a figure is of no value in itself.'³⁵¹ This was also intended to demonstrate the double sense of certain words whose literal meaning is similar to silver and hidden meaning is like the gold within.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 22

³⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 37

³⁵¹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 6

According to Maimonides, proving God's existence is certainly different from describing His essence. God's existence can be depicted through accounts and evidence of His creations. However, there are no exact proofs to demonstrate the essence of God.

Nevertheless, Maimonides did not associate heresies with those who claim God is a body unlike other bodies.³⁵² Therefore, it can be remarked that the verses described in figurative forms are merely meant to make man understand though in an equivocal manner. Besides, God's unlikeness to anyone proves our imparities to know His real sense. Maimonides acknowledged the boundaries undoubtedly set on the human mind, which it cannot overcome. There are things inaccessible to human understanding and man does not show any desire to comprehend them.³⁵³ Maimonides mentioned the sages' roles in rejecting an understanding of the literal sense of physical attributes. They nevertheless maintained a figurative description of God in Talmud and Midrash, where they opined that it is impossible for the verses to be misunderstood or doubted. In terms of figurative language, God is compared to a king who commands, rewards and punishes. It is for humans to depict God's command and abide by it. The sages assured there is no doubt or confusions in depicting a king.

It can be observed that Maimonides greatly agreed with Aristotelian works throughout his earlier discussion on the existence of God. Similarly, in the case of anthropomorphism, his allegorical approach is viewed as part of realizing Aristotle's stance on acknowledging different forms of expression.³⁵⁴ Maimonides attempted to rationalize the esoteric interpretation of God's humanly figure, although to him there is

³⁵² Wolfson. *The Philosophy of Kalam*. 110

³⁵³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 41

³⁵⁴ Leaman, Oliver. "Introduction to the Study of Medieval Jewish Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Eds Daniel H. Frank & Oliver Leaman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 11

nothing wrong with anthropomorphic expressions, as they enable the general audience to better grasp the Scriptures.

However, in an effort in figurative interpretation, Maimonides did not refer to the limitation of allegories, like what is the limitation in carrying out allegorical interpretation and what are the factors in carrying it out? It must be acknowledged that extreme allegorization may as well lead to heresy. There is no adequate philosophical reason or any demonstration of a different side presented in his discussion,³⁵⁵ unlike his demonstration of creation and eternity. Maimonides' predecessor Saadya Gaon appears to have been more thorough in explaining the interpretation guidelines.³⁵⁶

The only argument that is found similar to that of Maimonides is the remark that any conflict between the Scriptures and reason should be delineated; for instance, any argument that leads to the denial of miracles should be rejected. It can be deduced that to Maimonides, any verse deducing God's corporeality are worth interpreting allegorically.

In understanding heresy in an anthropomorphic sense, Maimonides claimed that people who acknowledge idol-worshipping to be true, even if they do not worship idols, are committing the sin of reviling and blaspheming the honored and revered name of God.³⁵⁷ Here, acknowledgement must be done in spoken words. Therefore, one will only be labeled a heretic if he claims that he believes God is a body.

Maimonides also referred in his *Mishneh Toreh* to heretics as "anyone who says that

³⁵⁵ David Shatz. "The Biblical and Rabbinic Background to Medieval Jewish Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Eds Daniel H. Frank & Oliver Leaman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 25

³⁵⁶ Saadya Gaon explained that figurative interpretation can only be done with these four reasons: 1) literal reading yields a thesis contrary to reason that cannot be demonstrated, 2) it contradicts human experience, 3) it contravenes accepted tradition, and 4) it contradicts other verses. Saadya Gaon, *Books of Doctrines and Beliefs*, 7: 2. See David Shatz. "The Biblical and Rabbinic Background to Medieval Jewish Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Eds Daniel H. Frank & Oliver Leaman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 25. Saadya Gaon, *Books of Doctrines and Beliefs*, 7:2

³⁵⁷ Harry Austryn Wolfson. "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God" *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. 57 (2), 1965, 112-136

there is one Lord but that He is a body and possesses a figure.”³⁵⁸ His remark here solidly refers to corporeality, or perceiving God as a body just like humans. Meanwhile, those who perceive bodily figures of God in an equivocal sense, such as saying that God is one and is a body unlike other bodies, are not considered heretics.

Maimonides held that God exceeds our capacity to attain knowledge of the divine nature, and we are severely limited in how we are able to describe or comprehend God. Even substance cannot be predicated of God in the sense of using the word to express knowledge of entities in the created order. According to Maimonides’ negative theology, God would not be described as the most powerful, all-knowing, incorruptible substance at the top of a hierarchy of substances, as this is a positive conception. However, we can say things about God on the basis of what we can know about the effects of divine activity and not the activity itself. “Every attribute that is found in the books of the deity...is therefore an attribute of His action and not an attribute of His essence.”³⁵⁹

Concluding Remarks

Overall, Maimonides compellingly prohibited the understanding of a corporeal God. In proving God’s incorporeality, Maimonides argued four possibilities to the essence of God. He must be either corporeal, incorporeal, a force distributed throughout all spheres, or an indivisible force. Maimonides explained the impossibility of all except for incorporeality, since the cause of the spheres must be incorporeal in order to be eternal and infinite. Incorporeality must also be neither divisible nor changeable and

³⁵⁸ See Wolfson, *Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God*. 117

³⁵⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 121

must not experience accidental moves, as God is the First Mover. Obviously Maimonides reiterated Aristotle's argument in proving God's incorporeality.

Besides, there are two key approaches to interpreting anthropomorphic verses: literal understanding and allegorical interpretation. Maimonides can be seen as vigorously subscribing to the second approach. He firmly emphasized the allegorical approach should be used in understanding anthropomorphic verses. He also affirmed that the Scriptures contain underlying meanings that must be understood equivocally. Thus, allegorical interpretation is required, especially with regards to verses that attribute God figuratively.

Maimonides also warned against adopting interpretations that may not be suitable regarding God, or endeavoring to negate God from something rather than affirming attributes of God. This is because he claimed that the human knowledge capacity cannot reach God's divinity. Therefore, to avoid such conflict from occurring, Maimonides suggested that the layman only instill a belief of God's incorporeality as a fundamental belief.

3.6 Comparative Analysis on Anthropomorphism

The two main points deduced from the discussion above are proofs of God's incorporeality and the interpretation of anthropomorphic verses.

3.6.1 Proofs of God's Incorporeality

It is noted that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' core metaphysical argument lies in emphasizing God's incorporeality. Their argument is in response to the presence of

anthropomorphic verses in both Scriptures that can lead to an understanding of a corporeal God.

Al-Ghazālī's contention on this subject was presented in several books, principally in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Dīn* and *al-Iqtisad fī al-I'tiqad*. Meanwhile, Maimonides extensively discussed this matter in both *Mishneh Torah* and *Guide of the Perplexed*.

Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides applied quite similar demonstrative reasoning to prove God's incorporeality. Al-Ghazālī argued that God's essence must be renounced from space, body, accidents and directions. This directly affirms God's existence but without being attached to space, body or substance. In terms of the origin of existence, every existence must either exist in space or without. Everything that occupies space and is attached to something is known as a body, whereas that which is imbued within is called *jawhar fard*. As for existence that is not attached to space and is in bodily form is known as accident. On the other hand, existence that is without any attachment to a body or space is God.

Maimonides explored four possibilities: corporeality, incorporeality, and distributed or indivisible force. He concluded that incorporeality suits God most as the agent and first mover who is not affected by the motion and accidents of other corporeal beings.

It is apparent that al-Ghazālī's categorization is deduced from the theory of the atom, which is in line with the argument of theologians like the Ash'arite. Meanwhile, Maimonides' categorization that is divided into force and actual, seems to be closely related to the theories of potential and actual as well as emanation.

A substance that inherits a body certainly requires accidents and is subject to temporal creation, which is impossible of God as claimed by al-Ghazālī. Similarly, Maimonides argued that God must neither be corporeal nor reside in a corporeal object that has to be indivisible and unchangeable. The similarity proposes that the Almohad

background had an important role in shaping Maimonides' conception of the nature of God, which is contrary to that of the rabbinic position.

According to their propositions, al-Ghazālī evidently argued on accidents and matter from the theologians' perspective, whereas Maimonides' argument is parallel to the philosophers, especially Aristotle, who reasoned God's incorporeality through the argument of motion. Al-Ghazālī claimed that idolatry is unacceptable in Islam. Similarly, Maimonides also emphasized that believing that God is corporeal entails idolatry and it is considered heretic. In sum, both scholars considered God's incorporeality as the highest form of divinity and anthropomorphic verses in the Holy Scriptures must not be translated as God's literal figure.

3.6.2 Interpretation of Anthropomorphic³⁶⁰ Verses

Regarding the interpretation of anthropomorphic verses, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides basically affirmed two approaches. One is to understand the anthropomorphic verses in their literal form and the other is allegorical interpretation. Al-Ghazālī differed from Maimonides in affirming another level, which al-Ghazālī acknowledged as consigning the meanings of anthropomorphic verses to God.

First, in understanding verses literally, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides declared that it is prohibited to perceive verses as describing God figuratively. Their refutation of a literal understanding of anthropomorphic verses is apparent in their arguments on affirming God's incorporeality.

³⁶⁰ The term anthropomorphism was derived from the Greek *Anthropos* (human) and *morphe* (form). It denotes the attribution of human physical features to deities. Its origin dates back to the Greek religious thinker Xenophanes (560-478BC) who repudiated the perception of God in human form. See <https://global.britannica.com/topic/anthropomorphism>. 4 September 2016. Al-Ghazālī in his writing referred to anthropomorphic verses as *isti'arah* (metaphors), while Maimonides described these verses in his writing as *mushtarak* (equivocation).

With respect to the second approach of allegorical interpretation, both claimed that in proving God's divinity, no comparison can be made between God and humans, as there can never be commonalities between a creator and the creation. Although terms that describe God are commonly applied to humans as well, they must be understood as equivocal according to both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides.

It can be seen that al-Ghazālī's definition of equivocal (*mushtarikah*)³⁶¹ is similar to Maimonides, which denotes a name shared by two entities that have nothing in common, whether in their quiddity or accident, but is nonetheless similar at the surface, such as sharing similar words. This is in parallel to the metaphor of God and man. Although God and man are both known to possess the attribute of life, their concept and meaning of life nonetheless totally differ.

Thus, according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, there are verses that necessitate allegoric interpretation to avoid the notion of corporeality. Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed on rejecting a literal understanding of verses that describe God's figure or bodily form. The two scholars shared the same view on interpreting anthropomorphic verses to perceive God suitably.

Regarding the interpretation of anthropomorphic verses, al-Ghazālī elaborated in his *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah* that to determine whether a verse requires allegorical interpretation, one must skim through the five levels of existence, namely the ontological (*wujud al-dhati*), sensory (*hissi*), conceptual (*khayali*), noetic (*'aqli*) and analogous (*shabahi*) existences. One may only initiate interpretation if the verses cannot be understood at the first three levels. This suggests that al-Ghazālī also encouraged only those who possess knowledge to interpret the underlying meanings of

³⁶¹ This is different from *mutawati'a* (univocal) and *mushakkik* (amphibolous). Univocal shares the similar essential essence between two things, while amphibolous refers to two things that constitute similar accidents but different quiddity. Therefore, equivocation is the most suitable for describing God and humans. See al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yar al-'Ilm*. (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1961), 81

anthropomorphic verses that cannot be attributed to God in a literal sense. He highlighted that one must abide by the process of allegorical interpretation.

Meanwhile, Maimonides did not propose any guideline for interpretation, but provided an extensive explanation of the equivocal approach. This is opposed to the univocal approach that implies similar word meanings may be ascribed to God and other beings. In the case of anthropomorphism, a meaning attributed to God is different from the meaning attributed to humans. This clearly demonstrates Maimonides' strong attachment to allegorical interpretation in showing the differences between God and humans.

It can be observed that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides differed in their scope of what needs to be interpreted and what does not. Both agreed that directions, shapes and forms are to be interpreted. However, Maimonides tended to interpret the attributes of seeing, hearing and speaking as well. Maimonides affirmed that homonyms in the verses must be interpreted to avoid forming figurative views of God. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī was more inclined towards accepting the verses as they are, and at the same time rejected a bodily figure in God's essence. With regards to God's attributes, al-Ghazālī asserted that they must be understood equivocally but it is not required to interpret them.

Among the verses for which that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides seemed to advocate allegorical interpretation are the verses regarding God's throne, hands, fingers, and walking.

Allegorical interpretation, from both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' perspectives, is intended to purify God from corporeality. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī's allegorical procedure seems to be more systematic than Maimonides, who did not mention any method for allegorical interpretation; Maimonides only echoed Onkelos in paraphrasing most verses and implementing an understanding of equivocation in the

interpretations. Maimonides emphasizes vagueness in terms of the Scriptures having an esoteric meaning. Based on this notion, Maimonides even interpreted verses on God's attributes, which he refuted.

Maimonides accentuated the unlikeness of God in every discussion, including on God's existence, anthropomorphism and attributes. However, Maimonides did not stop there in interpreting God, but instead became radical in his interpretation to the extent of negating any positive attributes associated with God. Maimonides can be seen as having a similar stance to the Mu'tazilite. Al-Ghazālī likewise described the Mu'tazilite as excessively interpreting Quranic verses and refuting affirmative attributes. Al-Ghazālī additionally stated that excessive interpretation emerged from following the desire to use reason above revelation, as the Mu'tazilite and Maimonides did.

On the other hand, Maimonides indirectly refuted al-Ghazālī's notion of God's attributes. He claimed that on subsisting essential attributes such as existence, life, power, wisdom and will, preceding Arab scholars may have overlooked the fact that God cannot be compared to humans on any level, be it the magnitude or degree of perfection, stability or even durability. As Maimonides denied any likeness between man and God, he likewise denied any similarity or likeness in predicating man and God. Maimonides reasoned that God has no likeness to humans and therefore one must believe that every description of God posits ambiguous interpretation.

Maimonides explained his notion of the difference between equivocation or homonyms with univocal and amphibolous. It is evident that Maimonides attempted to rebut al-Ghazālī's theory of attributes using this premises. When the theologians (al-Ghazālī included) applied attributes to God, Maimonides felt they believed that the attributes of God and humans are amphibolous, or share a similar notion but vary in quality or quantity. For instance, both God and humans possess power but the degree

of God's power is higher than humans' power, which is in line with the theologians' affirmations of God's attributes. Moreover, Maimonides argued that positioning the attributes of both humans and God in the same definition as a superadded subject to God and man is definitely impossible. This argument will be elaborated in the next chapter on the attributes of God.

Third, the level at which al-Ghazālī differs from Maimonides in consigning meanings of anthropomorphic verses to God obviously distinguishes the two scholars. Al-Ghazālī formulated seven steps in understanding anthropomorphic verses in their original form including the necessity to purify God from being likened to anything else. One must basically purify, affirm, admit self-limitation, be silent, maintain the original verse, abstain from delving and lastly, leave interpretation to the learned scholars.

On the same note, Maimonides acknowledged the layman and rabbinic traditions of adopting the original form of anthropomorphic verses and not forming a figurative belief of God. Maimonides pointed out that the Hanabilites and their followers who accepted the verses as they are and believed that God is a body unlike other bodies, were neither polytheist nor corporealist. This is in line with the Bible, "There is none like unto Thee" (Jeremiah 10: 6). The same is true of the Quran, which mentions "there is none equal to Him" (Quran 112: 4). Similarly, al-Ghazālī did not refer to those who purify the notion of God having weaknesses in understanding anthropomorphic verses as heretics. The only deficiency within Maimonides' argument is that he did not explicitly elaborate on his approach. He only superficially addressed the layman approach and was more focused and inclined towards explaining allegorical interpretation, which is perhaps due to the nature of *The Guide* itself that was more aimed for scholars. Thus, it is noted that al-Ghazālī's method of interpreting anthropomorphic verses is more coherent and concise.

Basically, the similarities between the two scholars are in their agreement upon rejecting the literal sense of the figurative verses on God. Both strongly upheld God's unity and divinity, which must be sanctified from corporeality. Moreover, they opined that parables are included in the sacred texts to ease human's understanding. Nonetheless, allegorical interpretation must be done accordingly and must be supported by other verses from the Qur'an and Hebrew Bible. Maimonides' allegorical interpretation seems more vigorous than al-Ghazālī who advocated guidelines and limitations to interpreting verses allegorically. Maimonides held that every sense of a verse that is predicated of God, including attributes, affections, directions, organs and others that may also be predicated of humans, must be interpreted as the verse holds double meaning. Al-Ghazālī's comprehensiveness in demonstrating his argument on interpretation can be seen further in his establishment of the second level of understanding, which was basically meant for the layman. Al-Ghazālī suggested consigning meaning to God and followed seven steps that he outlined coherently in addressing anthropomorphic verses. Therefore, it can be deduced that al-Ghazālī's attempt to strike a middle ground in interpretation between the literalists and the allegorists seems to be more comprehensive and coherent in addressing the different needs of laymen and scholars.

Concluding Remarks

As far as the various arguments are concerned, it can be summed that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides rejected any corporeal forms to be attributed to His essence. Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides advocated God's incorporeality and negated that God is attributed to any form of space, substance, accident or direction. Their divergence in argument perhaps differs in the different natures of understanding the fundamental concept of the existence of substance. Al-Ghazālī established his argument based on

the theory of the created atom while Maimonides' originated from the theory of potential and actual, which proposes the existence of potential and actual in an emanative form.

Whereas on the issue of interpreting anthropomorphism literally, it is observed that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides rejected understanding anthropomorphic verses on God in a literal sense. Al-Ghazālī's rejection of the literal sense led him to establish another level of understanding God from the original verses by consigning the original meaning to God. He further outlined seven steps to be adopted by the layman and those who do not wish to interpret allegorically. In addition, al-Ghazālī delineated regulations for interpreting verses allegorically, to which one must adhere in order to avoid excessive interpretation.

Maimonides, on the other hand, prior to rejecting anthropomorphic verses, strongly upheld the need to interpret the verses allegorically for he believed that every such verse holds a double meaning. This was part of his attempt to demonstrate the philosophical thought that is readily imbued within the Scriptures. Although he acknowledged the layman approach, which he did not consider as heretic, he nevertheless did not give further details.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

In sum, it can be observed that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides advocated God as the necessary existent. However, their categorization of necessary existence differs that leads to the notion of dualism in understanding necessary existence according to Maimonides. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī only affirmed that God is the only necessary existent and therefore the universe was created out of nothing. Maimonides too believed that the universe was created by God but it was created out of an eternal

matter that co-existed with God. Thus, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī perceived God as the Agent while Maimonides affirmed that God is both the Agent and the Cause of existence. This leads to Maimonides' affirmation towards the concept of necessary causation which every substance emerge from its potential form before the actualization occurs. In contrary, al-Ghazālī rebutted the necessary causation as the theory indirectly hampered God's power and al-Ghazālī instead adduced that God particularizes every occurrence. Maimonides too affirmed God's particularization, however according to him the particularization only involves the arbitrariness of the spherical design. Maimonides could not accept God's particularization in every occurrence as he failed to affirm God's power to create directly which could not be demonstrated in physical science. Thus, Maimonides whose argument was in line with the peripatetic philosophers, conformed towards the theory of necessary causation in understanding the nature of existence. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī did not blatantly deny the causation which occurs in the natural world. However al-Ghazālī differentiated between cause possessing will and natural causes that does not possess will. Al-Ghazālī accepted God as the cause who possesses will as the true Agent. Other causes such as the natural cause could not be regarded as the agent of the occurrences.

Whereas in the discussion on anthropomorphism, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides held that God is incorporeal and free from substance, body and accidents. It can be summed that al-Ghazālī's argument was more concise for the layman when he proposed seven approaches that one has to adopt in reading anthropomorphic verses. Al-Ghazālī did not necessitate allegorical interpretation towards all anthropomorphic verses. While Maimonides on the other hand, interpreted every anthropomorphic verses allegorically. This is due to his fundamental understanding that every verse in the Bible contains esoteric meaning. Thus, it can be observed that in

terms of the method in understanding the anthropomorphic verses, al-Ghazālī's argument was more profound.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 4

THE ATTRIBUTES AND NAMES OF GOD ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZĀLĪ AND MAIMONIDES

4.0 Introduction

In attempting to speak of the Divine, man spontaneously posits attributes to God. Apparently, philosophers following the Mu'tazilite claimed that subscribing God attributes may imply plurality of His essence. Contrarily, if God could not be predicated any attributes, how would perceiving Him as omnipotent, omniscient and others, not be considered His attributes? Another core matter frequently debated among scholars regarding attributes is whether God's attributes are similar to, or distinct from His essence. If His essence and attributes are similar, the contingency of His creations would affect His eternal essence. On the other hand, if attributes are superadded to His essence, it is deemed to entail plurality. In describing God in the most precise and gracious way, Maimonides and al-Ghazālī differed; al-Ghazālī affirmed God has eternal attributes whereas Maimonides refuted that any qualities should be associated with God. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to expound both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' arguments on their perceptions of God's attributes.

4.1 Attributes of God According to al-Ghazālī

The core notion of attributes is mainly to address God's active relation to human beings in determining His eternal essence and the result of His actions that are contingents. Without ascribing attributes to God, God would consequently have to possess the same contingencies as His creations. This occurs in cosmological subjects,

which distinguish al-Ghazālī from peripatetic Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rusyd who obviously succumbed to the Aristotelian view of the eternal universe.³⁶² Al-Ghazālī emphasized on this topic in his extensive discussion in *Iḥyā'* and *Iqtiṣād*. The discussion is divided in three sections, namely the position of attributes with regards to essence, essential attributes and God's names.

4.1.1 The Position of Attributes to God's Essence

In the discourse of attributes, al-Ghazālī mainly rebutted the Mu'tazilite and philosophers' claims of God's simple essence without any superadded attributes. They believed that attributes entail accidents to God's essence, thus making God corporeal. God's essence is eternal, so to them it must be a simple divine being through which, by His essence, God knows, lives, and possesses power and will. They maintained that being a knower is a state of essence and not an attribute.³⁶³ Similarly, the philosophers claimed that God wills in the virtue of His essence and not because He possesses the attribute of will. The philosophers would then conclude that knowledge, power, will and life are all equal to His essence. His essence is perfect, and if God knows, He would surely be alive and possess both power and will.

Al-Ghazālī found that the root of these mistakes lies in these philosophers' failure to distinguish between different attributes. For instance, they perceived God as a knower and existent in one entity.³⁶⁴ Hence, in explicating the position of divine attributes and essence, al-Ghazālī proposed three main concepts of attributes. One,

³⁶² On the peripatetic see Majid Fakhry. *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-'Arabiyyah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Suri, 1981), 98

³⁶³ The Mu'tazilite made an exception for two attributes: speech and will. They claimed that God being a willer with will and a speaker with speech would be additional to essence. Except that God creates will without any place (*maḥāl*) but creates speech in a corporeal body. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, 195-196

³⁶⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, 196

God's attributes are superadded to His essence. Two, all His attributes subsist in His essence. Three, all God's attributes are eternal.

First, all essential attributes, namely power, will, knowledge, life, sight, hearing and speech must be conceived as superadded to His essence. Al-Ghazālī denied that God's power and the other six attributes are similar to His essence, as His attributes are different from His divine essence. God knows with His knowledge and acts with His power. If one claims that His attributes and essence are equal, one will have to claim that knower and existent are the same. It is as if one says God is an existent and that is absurd. Besides, if one denies that it is not additional, it would fail to be a description of God and thus it unites with God's essence.³⁶⁵ This is also absurd because one needs to differentiate between the existent essence and the knower for the existent, where knowledge can be derived from the name knower.³⁶⁶

This proves that attributes precede something superadded to God's essence and it is impossible for attributes to be similar to His essence. Therefore, it is termed a superadded attribute, by which the attribute complements the act. Power signifies God's omnipotence, knowledge signifies His omniscience and life signifies His omnipresence.³⁶⁷

Al-Ghazālī claimed that if borrowing concepts from terms when multiple terms are generated by derivations, falling into error becomes unavoidable. For the notion of cause and effect is assumed to consist of the elements of potential and actual. In response to this problem, al-Ghazālī questioned whether being omnipotent and omniscient is similar and whether giving a command is similar to reporting and

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 197

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 195

prohibiting. These questions aim to reveal the philosophers' erroneous apprehension of God's attributes.³⁶⁸

Al-Ghazālī further affirmed that it is impossible for one attribute or one essence to replace and entail knowledge, power, life and the rest of the attributes as claimed by the Mu'tazilite³⁶⁹ and philosophers. This is because the revelation itself affirms the existence of different attributes of God. Nevertheless, God's knowledge does not necessarily imply its multiplicity, although His knowledge contains all preceding events of the universes.

It must be noted that al-Ghazālī clearly rejected categorizing attributes as accidents on two grounds. First, attributes require a place and demonstrate the contingency of a thing. In contrary, God must be nullified from any contingencies. Secondly, places that situate accidents must be in physical form or *jawhar fard*. It was clearly mentioned in the previous chapter that God's essence is neither a body nor *jawhar fard*, as both are temporal. Accidents require a body or *jawhar fard* to posit either one, and therefore God must be nullified from accidents.³⁷⁰

Thus, it is noted here that al-Ghazālī neither believed that attributes are not something other than God nor the same as His essence.³⁷¹ For saying 'God, the Exalted' does not refer to essence alone or to attributes per se but rather to divine essence together with divine attributes. Hence, God's attributes are something other than God and definitely not His essence. Al-Ghazālī claimed this is permissible on two conditions. First, it must not be against the laws. Second, the term 'other' must be

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 197

³⁶⁹ In the *al-Mughnī*, Abd al-Jabbar mentions that God is all Hearing and all Seeing to explicate His capability to perceive objects heard and seen. These are not considered attributes except as part of His condition of being alive and not something superadded to Him. Abd al-Jabbar, *al-Mughnī*, 241.

³⁷⁰ Al-Hubaisyi, *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhī fī Fikr al-Imām al-Ghazālī: 'Araḍ wa al-Tahlīl*. 94

³⁷¹ For instance, Zayd's hand is not Zayd but is other than Zayd. For any part of what is designated by a name is not other than what is designated by the name. Every part is not other than the whole nor is it the same as a whole. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*. 202

understood as something that may not exist independently without the essence. This clarifies the meaning of superadded attributes according to al-Ghazālī's belief.

Secondly, al-Ghazālī asserted that the seven essential attributes, namely power, knowledge, will, life, seeing, hearing and speech are subsistent in God's essence (*qāimah bi dhātihi*) and distinct from His essence. The main reason al-Ghazālī affirmed this is to address the Mu'tazilites who deemed that God's speech and will neither subsist in His essence nor in any other place. It is not eternal and therefore created by God. This is because both attributes entail additional creation and contingents and therefore cannot be directly related to God, for this will cause God's essence to be contingent as well. Al-Ghazālī, on the other hand, affirmed that since the proof of creation indicates the existence of the Maker, the Maker must thus possess such attributes. There is no difference between His being that attribute and the attributes subsisting in His essence. Meaning to say, when it is said God is a willer, it directly shows will subsists in His essence and vice versa.³⁷²

Al-Ghazālī maintained that God knows with knowledge, lives with life, acts with power, and so on. Al-Ghazālī forwarded an example in differentiating between God, His attributes and the object with the analogy of having knowledge, the knower and the known, all of which require one another.³⁷³ The three qualities are inseparable and inconceivable without the other.

Third, it is essential to perceive the seven attributes as eternal. God could not be the substratum of the originated phenomena and subject to change. Similar to His essence, His attributes necessitate eternity and being free from any changes, because

³⁷² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*, 203-204

³⁷³ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 1, 167

change is the main phenomenon of a created being and would therefore defeat the purpose of God being eternal if He were prone to changes.³⁷⁴

However, there were claims that the attributes of will, speech and knowledge are contingents. These claims basically emerged from the Mu'tazilite, Karamite and Jahmite. They argued that if will is eternal, the object would be eternal too, as the object of will must co-exist with the will.³⁷⁵ Al-Ghazālī in his *Iqtisād* said if God's speech is created as argued by the Mu'tazilite, how could God speak in the eternity regarding Noah if God had not created him? Besides, it is also known that God is the commander and forbider since eternity, without there being anyone to command and forbid.³⁷⁶ As for speech, al-Ghazālī mentioned the argument that if God knows the world came into existence prior to the present, His knowledge must be contingent.³⁷⁷ These are the implications claimed by the Mu'tazilite in affirming the attributes of knowledge, will and speech to God's essence.

In response to the above matters, al-Ghazālī refuted all three arguments on the attributes of knowledge, will and speech, affirming that these attributes are eternal despite the contingencies of their objects. Al-Ghazālī gave a scenario as an example of knowledge of the presence of Zayd at sunrise. God's foreknowledge persisted until the sun had risen and when Zayd came into the picture, God's knowledge was still the same and was not renewed. However, it is the realization of His eternal knowledge that is subject to change. It is evident that God's cognition remains one and unchanging, encompassing past, present and future events.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*. 204

³⁷⁵ The Mu'tazilite claimed that will is an attribute that has no receptacle. Meanwhile, the Karamites affirmed it to be in God's essence. See Al-Juwayni. *Al-Irsyād*. 64

³⁷⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*. 210

³⁷⁷ This is the argument of Jahm b. Safwan See also Al-Juwayni. *Al-Irsyād*. 96. See also al-Baghdadi. *Uṣūl al-Dīn*. (Turkey: Madrasah al-Ilahiyah, 1928). 95

³⁷⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād* 211

As for God's will, it must also be eternal in accordance with the creation of temporal beings according to the allocated time and His knowledge. If His will is temporal, then it requires another will and it would become a substratum (*maḥāl*) for created beings. Therefore, God must have willed each occurring event with an eternal will. Al-Ghazālī further added that occurrences ensue through an eternal will that attaches to them and hence distinguishes them from their opposites that are also equivalent to them. Will is just an attribute that functions as a particulariser. Will only attaches to contingency at a specific time.³⁷⁹

Al-Ghazālī pronounced God's eternity is through His speech as well as self-existing. This refers to God's speech to Moses in the Qur'an 20:12, which demonstrates the live interaction between them. God's word must not be taken as only existing when the dialogue took place; it has existed with Him before and only gave Moses the knowledge and ability to hear this eternal discourse during His command.³⁸⁰

To clarify that these attributes are not contingents, al-Ghazālī claimed that they are attached to occurrences at specific times. Just like God's will, it is nothing but an attribute whose function is to distinguish a thing from its counterparts. It can be observed that al-Ghazālī served a somewhat holistic defence upon associating God's eternal attribute to contingencies.

All in all, al-Ghazālī affirmed that God's attributes vis-a-vis His essence are superadded, subsistent in His essence and eternal. This argument is forwarded in rebutting the Mu'tazilite and philosophers' claim that attributes are accidents and impossible to be associated with God. Besides, al-Ghazālī also argued to prove that God's attributes should be distinguished from the objects of attributes. This is proven as al-Ghazālī claimed for instance that God's will, which is only an attribute, is

³⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 173

³⁸⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 168

attached to the contingent during a specific time. As for His knowledge, it comprises the past, present and future and is one and unchangeable, while God's speech has existed sempiternal and only occurs during specific times.

4.1.2 Essential attributes

In the Ash'arite tradition, the attributes of God have been extensively discussed over decades and developed into a more systematic approach and categorization. God's 20 well-known attributes outlined by al-Sanusi (1490)³⁸¹ in his *Umm al-Barāhīn* are expounded into four categories. The formulation of attributes did not occur during his time. However, the affirmation of attributes has been mentioned earlier and highlighted since the Asy'ari (873), and was later reiterated by his successor al-Juwaynī (1028) and al-Ghazālī. Only the categorization into 20 attributes was formulated by al-Sanusi.

Under the first section of *Ihyā'* and *Iqtīṣād* on the essence of God, al-Ghazālī mentioned God's essential attributes of existence, eternal, immortality and oneness. These attributes were later categorized into two in the 13th century. First, the existent, which denotes God's self-attributes (*naḥsiyyah*). Secondly, attributes such as eternal, immortality and oneness are termed negative attributes (*salbiyyah*) as these negate attributes that are not compatible with God. In cleansing His essence from deficiencies and similarities with His creations, they complement the perfect being of God who

³⁸¹ The concept of 20 attributes was established by Muhammad Yusuf al-Sanusi (1490). It consists of four parts: *wujudiyyah*, *dhatiyyah*, *ma'nawiyyah* and *ma'ani*. The discourse of 20 attributes only emerged during the 13th century. This occurred due to the confusions that arose among Muslim on the true understanding of God, when a lot of discussions regarding God and other creedal issues were jumbled up with philosophical discourse. Therefore, al-Sanusi rearranged the concept in a form that could be understood by Muslim generally without being deviated by pondering upon the philosophical notion. Al-Sanusi, Muhammad Yusuf. *Syarḥ Umm al-Barāhīn: Hāshiyah al-Dasūqī 'alā Umm al-Barāhīn*. (Cairo: Matba'ah Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah. N.d) 72. See also Mudasir Rosder. *Asas Tauhid: Pertumbuhan dan Huraianya*, 62

cannot be associated with any partner or superior, being the first who does not possess a beginning and ending.³⁸² Al-Ghazālī discussed eternal, immortality and oneness as follows.

First, al-Ghazālī emphasized God's eternity (*qidam*) by negating the element of contingency as the Creator. If God is not eternal and pre-eternal, He would otherwise be similar to the universe that requires a creator, which entails infinite regress. Regression is not logically acceptable without the eternal principal cause that precedes every contingent. Al-Ghazālī noted that he only affirmed God's eternity to repudiate God's non-existence. He also emphasized that it is not an added meaning to God's eternal essence but is a negative attribute that emphasizes its opposite in purifying God's essence. Therefore, God's eternity must be understood along with the impossibility of His non-existence.

Secondly, al-Ghazālī mentioned His perpetuity (*baqā'*) or immortality in his method of *al-sabru wa al-taqsim* (principle and division)³⁸³ in saying "If God is not affirmed with perpetuity He will be otherwise." His attributes of eternity and perpetuity are meant to delineate the impossibility of destroying God's essence. He argued that if God is eternal, self-destruction is impossible for Him. The proof lies in the realization that if He came to naught (*in'adama*) it is inevitable that He should come to naught either by Himself or through another agent or cause. Apparently it is

³⁸² Although al-Ghazālī did not mention explicitly the categorization of the negative (*salbiyyah*) attributes, he nevertheless emphasized in every explanation of the attributes the vitality of negating the opposites of God's attributes in order to affirm His attributes. Besides, he also mentioned that apart from negating God's weaknesses, al-Ghazālī also negated accidents, positions and physical bodies to purify conceiving God's essence. Mudasar Rosder. *Asas Tauhid: Pertumbuhan dan Huraianya*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. 1989. 62.

³⁸³ This is a technical term applied by theologians in reference to a type of syllogism. Al-Hubaisyi explicates al-Ghazālī's argument from three possibilities. First, there must be an antonym that could defend the agent of ending the continuous existence and causing other existence to be eternal so that only one being could remain eternal. Second, the one that hold the responsibility of eternity to have cause is rebutted. Third, the eternal being should have cause its own annihilation (nought). Therefore these impossibilities negate God from being non-existent to being nought, at the same time affirming God's eternity and immortality. Al-Hubaisyi. *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhī fī Fikr al-Imam al-Ghazālī: 'Araḍ wa al-Tahlīl*. 70-71

impossible for God to have a cause or agent.³⁸⁴ Thus, the state of naught must be separated from God.

Third, God's oneness and unity must be affirmed through negating any partners of God and denying any match comparable to God. God is the one who creates and manages without any assistance from others and He possesses no opposite power conflicting His. To prove God's unity, al-Ghazālī pointed out Qur'anic verse 21:22 "If there had been in them any gods except Allah, they would have both have certainly been in a state of disorder, therefore glory be to Allah." This verse proves the impossibility of having more than one God. If there were two gods, one must be more powerful and stronger and the other weaker. It is therefore impossible to associate this to God as He is the most powerful of all.³⁸⁵

Next, al-Ghazālī affirmed seven attributes of God: knowledge, power, life, will, hearing, sight and speech. He mentioned that these attributes differ from the previous three.³⁸⁶ These seven attributes were elaborated by al-Ghazālī twofold: one, according to their specifications and two, according to the common concepts with regard to all these attributes discussed in the previous subtopic.

First, al-Ghazālī noted that one must believe God is omnipotent, as He is the Creator of the universe. He argued this in a syllogistic manner: any masterly work proceeds from a powerful agent, so the world is a masterly work as it proceeds from a powerful agent. This is demonstrated in the perfect condition of the world and its orderly composition.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*, 103, Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 164

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 166

³⁸⁶ These attributes are meanings or conceptual attributes in contrast to the previous attributes that only refer to God's essence. These conceptual or essential attributes are therefore superadded and subsisting in God's essence. Unlike the previous attributes that negate weaknesses from God, these seven attributes reflect God and His relation to His creation. Thus, it is known as *ma'na* (meaning or concept) of God to avoid His multiplicity of essence in His direct relation to man's contingencies. See comments (*hasyiah*) by Anas Muhammad 'Adnan al-Syarfawi in Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*. 149

³⁸⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād* 149

According to al-Ghazālī, God's power is closely connected to all possibilities, beyond any limits. It is thus evident that a continuous creation occurs with God's power. Al-Ghazālī explicated that God's power is one and does not multiply with every creation that takes place. Therefore, His power related to the object of power must be one, as an attribute. Despite its oneness, power becomes related to all substances and accidents in their multiplicity without sharing any common element except for possibility, which also occurs through God's power.³⁸⁸ In short, al-Ghazālī summed that substance, accidents and movements could not exist or occur in their manner unless with the power of God. This demonstrates that continuous creation and movement could not escape from His power.

Three questions arise regarding the attribute of divine power. The first question is whether the object of power can be contradictory to the object of knowledge. The second question is whether the power of the created such as animals is also created by God. Third, how is it possible for a single divine power to attach to multiple generated occurrences?

In addressing the argument on the possibility of a contradiction between what is known and the object of power (*maqḍūr*), al-Ghazālī affirmed that things which are not within His power and knowledge are impossible. In order to explain this, al-Ghazālī presented an example of Zayd who was said to die on Saturday morning. A statement that contradicts the former is to say that Zayd will be given life on Saturday morning. Given that, it is impossible for Zayd to be alive on that particular day if the second statement is dependent on the first. Meanwhile, it is also possible for him to be alive if he is free from any possibilities and impossibilities. Therefore, contradiction may happen if it is solely dependent upon God's power, as nothing is exempt from His

³⁸⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 169

power. However, in depending upon His foreknowledge on the death of Zayd, it is impossible since it is inadmissible to associate ignorance with God.³⁸⁹

Although everything is possible to happen according to His power, it must nevertheless be parallel with God's knowledge and will.³⁹⁰ Therefore, these two notions cannot contradict each other as both carry the same nature of possibility. The nature of a possible occurrent is possible in its own virtue but it becomes impossible owing to something other than itself when the attachment of God's knowledge of Zayd's death is taken into consideration and not by virtue of its own essence.³⁹¹

Here it can be said that it is possible for things to happen by their own virtue or according to God's power. However, it would be impossible for things to happen if they rely on God's knowledge, and everything that occurs must be concurrent with what God knows. Therefore, the object of power and the object of God's knowledge cannot be conflicting. God's knowledge consists of impossibilities as well,³⁹² and what occurs cannot escape either His power or knowledge.

In addressing the second question, al-Ghazālī incorporated two powers as being inherent to every action: the power of God and the voluntary movement of humans, which differs from involuntary movement that does not require power. If God's power is attached to all possibilities, then all occurrences are possible and man's actions are

³⁸⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 151

³⁹⁰ Things that are possible to exist do not exist according to the intellect but on their own virtue. There are things that are possible to occur by their own virtue but impossible by other virtues. Things may become impossible due to their contradicting God's knowledge. See al-Hubaisyi. *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhī fī Fikr al-Imām al-Ghazālī*. 206-207.

³⁹¹ What is impossible on its own essence is that whose existence is prevented because of its essence such as blackness and whiteness and not because of an impossibility necessitated by something other than its essence.

³⁹² The philosophers' arguments go further to the power and knowledge of God, which has no ending and limit, as well as His continuous existence which is within his limit of power. Al-Ghazālī explained that God's power remains possible and nothing is necessary or impossible within His limit of power, while His knowledge is unlimited to the necessary, impossible and possible.

occurrences. Thus, both man's actions, be they voluntary and requiring man's power or non-voluntary that do not require man's power, are attached to God's power.³⁹³

Both God and humans have power that does not differ in its origination of act, otherwise it would mean that God's power carries greater weight because His power is stronger and eventually God's power determines or preponders (*tarjih*) man's actions. If this is the case, then man's power is futile. However, the difference lies in the concept of God's power being related to the act of creation while man's power is related to acquisition (*kasb*). According to al-Ghazālī, God's power enables non-existence to exist, and when an object or incident happens it proves that man has the power to do it. On the other hand, God's power does not necessarily require proof or creation to demonstrate His power. As the Divine, God holds the supreme power to choose whether to have created the universe or not. Even if He did not create the universe, it would not affect His omnipotence. As al-Ghazālī mentioned, this contradicts the philosophers' theory that with His power, God created the universe. In this case, al-Ghazālī held that when one attempts to attach necessity to God's power, it eventually leads to the theory of cause and effect. For al-Ghazālī, imposing cause and effect on God is totally absurd.³⁹⁴

Besides, it is similarly impossible to claim that the object of power contradicts the power of humans as well as to claim that God's power preponders or determines human power because God is the Creator and Originator of the power, the object of power and all movements.³⁹⁵ This differs from human power, which is known as *kasb*, literally meaning effort or acquisition. It is clear that human power differs from what is

³⁹³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*, 157

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 158

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 151

perceived as God's power, which is solely the power to create and originate, while man's power is his effort to produce the act.³⁹⁶

The third question arising from the discussion on God's power is on the generation (*tawallud*)³⁹⁷ of multiple occurrences by God's single power. This is a concept claimed by the philosophers who affirmed the theory of cause and effect that leads to generation. According to the peripetatic philosophers, generation is like the movement of a hand that generates the movement of water and the movement of a ring that is caused by the movement of the hand. This is correct, but it must nevertheless be acknowledged that it occurs with God's power, who can also move the hand without the ring and so on.³⁹⁸

Al-Ghazālī proved that the necessary causation inherent in the concept of *tawallud* leads to the theory of potential and actual, which is contradictory to the principle of accidents. Since the movement of the hand has no potential, such that the movement of the ring may emerge from it and it is not something that contains other things so that some of its contents emerge from it.³⁹⁹ Thus, al-Ghazālī affirmed that every occurrence possesses two possibilities: occurring according to conditions that

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Al-Ghazālī explained that although the object of power is related to both possessors of power, only one of them, God, is its originator. Indeed, God is the originator even of the power of the possessor of power. Yet the second power, the human being who is God's servant, retains the power to move even as God is the originator of his power. The servant's possession of power proves the difference between a voluntary act and a tremor. However, it appears to man that he has created the act himself. But the reality is, God is the one who creates in man a power that attaches to the same act. Thus, there are two powers, God's and man's power, and there is one act which is the common object of both powers. It is not about how each power creates the act but in a sense how each power 'attaches to' the act. See Aladdin M. Yaqub on his translation on al-Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief, 94. This is also elaborated in the next chapter on God's actions to prove al-Ghazālī's compatibilist approach between the determinist approach and God's actions and vice versa.

³⁹⁷ As claimed by Ibn Sīnā, every realization is attached to the order of things that is generated from one state to another. For every stage of generation, the earlier state must have recognized the preceding state that is linked through the process of generation. Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Isyārat wa al-Tanbīhāt*. (Cairo, Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d) 129.

³⁹⁸ To al-Ghazālī, the correct concept of generation is supposed to be for instance the emergence of a fetus from the belly or a plant from earth. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 161-162

³⁹⁹ If a person's hand moves, God must make a space for it to occupy and since the space is not vacant, the hand cannot occupy the space, therefore proving that no potential can exist within a space that is already occupied. The removal of one is a condition for the movement of the other; hence, they are concomitant (*lāzim*) with each other and it is thought that one is generated from the other, which is wrong. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 163

are concomitant (*lazimat*) and the possibility that something happens not according to the conditions, in which case it would be contrasting concomitant (*lāzimāt*) and would be considered a miracle. Therefore, al-Ghazālī emphasized that it is not true that some created things occur through other occurrences. The bottom line is that every event occurs through God's power.

The second essential attribute of God that al-Ghazālī mentioned is knowledge and it encompasses existent and non-existent objects. The existent include eternal and contingents things, where eternal basically refers to God's essence and attributes. Al-Ghazālī highlighted God's knowledge in particular. Logically, one who knows others must know himself. God's knowledge is not limited to time and place, existence and non-existence or even finite and infinite. Al-Ghazālī gave an example of multiplicity that can go on infinitely.⁴⁰⁰ Al-Ghazālī explicitly refuted the Mu'tazilite and philosophers who considered that God only knows the universals.

The third essential attribute is life, which is necessary for God. God must be alive in order to be associated to His attributes and actions. It is evident that God is alive to have an active relation with human beings.⁴⁰¹ Therefore, this attribute should not have raised any controversy among the philosophers and Mu'tazilah.⁴⁰²

Fourth, al-Ghazālī posited that God has the attribute of will. Each work done is a result of His will and nothing can exist without it. For God is the Creator, the Restorer and the Doer of every existing thing. The necessity to have the attribute of will is fairly important to God's power and knowledge. Al-Ghazālī strongly maintained that the attribute of will depends on two opposite extremes and the timing

⁴⁰⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 169

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, 167

⁴⁰² The issue of God who lives and knows is discussed among the Mu'tazilite and philosophers. They claimed that God lives and therefore He must be alive, demonstrating that His life and wisdom are similar and connote the same meaning. This was also claimed by Maimonides, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Al-Ghazālī refutes their argument through lexical argumentation by asking 'How can the concept of knowing be equal to the concept of living?' Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* 197. See also Dasuqi, *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhī fī Fikr al-Imām al-Ghazālī: 'Araḍ wa al-Tahlīl*. 235

of every occurring event. God's power supersedes every possible thing and His will determines His actions and decisions, thus directing God's power to one of the two possibilities. However, God's knowledge alone could not render both will and power irrelevant attributes by solely claiming that through knowledge of creation a being can exist. This is because a creation requires a power to bring it into existence and power necessitates will to decide on the specific knowledge. Therefore, al-Ghazālī stressed on the attribute of will in all God's creations and actions.⁴⁰³

Fifth, God must be attributed with hearing and sight. Al-Ghazālī highlighted the story of Prophet Ibrahim who was arguing with his father, an idol worshipper and crafter, as mentioned in the Qur'an. Here, al-Ghazālī employed this Qur'anic verse as his main argument in claiming God's vision and hearing, which should nevertheless be distinguished from humans'. Both are different in terms of nature and existence. It would be absurd to say that God's hearing and vision are the same as humans' as it would connote God's impairment and dependence on instruments. Al-Ghazālī underlined the different levels of knowledge through hearing, vision and power. These attributes, if associated with God, must reach a level of perfection where they must be removed from any contingent aspect of creation. Besides, they must not possess any continuous relation with the objects of the attributes. Having to affirm God's attribute of vision by necessarily objectifying vision is impossible with respect to God, because it would entail negating His attributes through existence, which is beyond the human senses.⁴⁰⁴

Finally, the stance on the attribute of speech profoundly separates the Ash'arite from the Mu'tazilite. Al-Ghazālī, as an Ash'arite, was certain that speech is one of God's self-existing attributes that stands on His essence. It represents neither sound

⁴⁰³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 167

⁴⁰⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 167

nor letters, an existence unlike others' existence. Genuine speech is inner speech (*kalam nafsi*). Sounds and letters are only symbols to gestures and signs, as the familiar Arab poem goes "Genuine speech is that of the heart; our words are its outward expression." Al-Ghazālī sceptically lamented those ignorant Arab poets who denied God's speech. Al-Ghazālī believed non-conventional speech preceding sounds and letters as being attributed to God. If God relied upon others for His speech to occur, it would demonstrate His dependency and at the same time deny His Self-existence and Self-dependence as not relying on others. His attribute of speech stands upon His essence without any tools or intermediaries. It is possible for God's speech to constitute sounds due to His limitless power; nevertheless, it is impossible to claim that God's speech cannot exist without sound, as this would decrease His power.⁴⁰⁵

4.1.3 Names of God

In the discussion on the names of God, al-Ghazālī demonstrated different connotations of names and objects named. He emphasized the divergence between the essence of the essence (*huwa huwa*) and the essence of others (*huwa ghayruh*), which determine the unity of God. Typically, al-Ghazālī began his argument by affirming God's unity through ascribing names and attributes unto the essence, as the Ash'arite.⁴⁰⁶

He strongly distinguished name from the object named, as the name given does not necessarily reflect the intended essence of the object. A given name, if desired to precisely reflect the essence of the intended, must connote the same meaning or understanding (*mafhum al-dhat*) of the intended object. Otherwise, it will only become a non-intended object (*ghayr al-musamma*). The given name cannot reflect the

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 168

⁴⁰⁶ In contrary, the Mu'tazilite referred to all attributes as similar to God's essence. Al-Ghazālī, Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad. *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fi Syarh Ma'āni Asmā' Allah al-Husnā*. Tahqiq Fadlough Shehadi (Beirut: Dar al-Masyriq, 1986), 17

intended object through proposing synonyms (*mutaradifan*),⁴⁰⁷ or words with similar meanings but different concepts (*mutadakhilan*),⁴⁰⁸ or through descriptions of something (*isharah ila shayain*)⁴⁰⁹. This is because none of the above point out the real meaning of ‘name,’ which must answer the questions ‘what is it?’ or ‘who is it?’ It reflects the real meaning of *musamma* that requires the name to fulfil the concept of unity in meaning and plenty in terms of its utterance of words. None of the above concepts can fulfill the real concept of name in reference to *huwa huwa* or *mahiyyah* (quiddity). It would only be possible if the name given to the intended object explicates the essence of the object (*dhāt*), its being (*haqiqah*) and its quiddity (*mahiyyah*). For instance, human is named as a rational animal and Allah is an existent being.⁴¹⁰

Apart from answering *huwa huwa* or quiddity, a name sometimes also reflects a thing’s non-being (*ghayr haqiqah*) in reference to attributes. There are attributes that need to be attached to their original attributes, where for instance for a creator (*khaliq*), the attribute requires to be established upon the proof and act of creation (*khalq*). Therefore, it does not directly reflect on God’s essence as the intended object (*musamma*) and is hence known as *ghayr musammā* (non-intended object). In predicating names indirectly to objects (*ghayr musamma*), al-Ghazālī explained God’s attributes as Creator and Sustainer. The predication of creator comes from the act of creating and sustainer from the act of sustaining, and these do not point to God directly. Meanwhile, names that are neither predicated to the *musamma* nor *ghayr musamma* are for instance the attributes of knowledge and power, which are superadded to His essence.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ *Mutaradifaini* means synonymous terms that connote similar meaning but through different terms.

⁴⁰⁸ *Mutadākhilāni* refers to two words with similar meaning but different usage

⁴⁰⁹ *Isyārah ilā syaia’ini* refers to two different concepts which describe one thing

⁴¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Syarh Ma’āni Asmā’ Allah al-Husnā*, 21-23

⁴¹¹ *Ibid*, 26-28

Al-Ghazālī also emphasized that names which are subscribed to idols are names intended to no object (*ism bi la musamma*). Reasonably, idols possess no existence and therefore cannot accept the existence of essence. According al-Ghazālī, there are three levels of existence. One entails existence in essence, which means a real being and existence. The second is existence in mind that is obtained through the intellect and the depiction process. Finally, there is existence from the tongue, which is proven through utterances and words.⁴¹² Thus, it is clear that the existence of the goodlihood in idols is highly questionable and therefore its existence is rejected.

As for the 99 names attributed to God, there are claims that God has 99 essences, with each name referring to an intended essence (*musamma*), which is clearly impossible for God. Al-Ghazālī briefly refuted this argument by reiterating the specific criteria required to directly predicate the essence, which is to assure the connotation or understanding (*mafhum*) of names must be parallel to its essence and being. The name ‘all-knowing’ certainly yields different connotations of creator and others. The principal argument that names are the same as the intended essence (*musamma*) leads to confusion. In order to resolve this problem, al-Ghazālī maintained the assertion by reformulating that names are similar to meanings (*ma’na*) and allow proclaiming “With God, there are good meanings (*ma’ani*).” Therefore, *ma’ani* can also refer to *musamma* (the intended essence), and there will be no absurdity in the multiplicity of meanings.⁴¹³

Next, al-Ghazālī included a discussion on attributes as part of God’s names. He claimed there are names derived from attributes, particularly the seven essential attributes. He affirmed that God is eternally living, a willer, a knower, powerful, a hearer, seer and sayer. Al-Ghazālī at the same time affirmed God’s name is derived

⁴¹² *Ibid*, 32

⁴¹³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Syarh Ma’āni Asmā’ Allah al-Husnā*, 34

from His acts, such as God is the provider, creator and exalter. As for the attributes, their eternity is strongly established. However, this is not the case with names derived from His acts, as al-Ghazālī clarified with the categorization of names.

Al-Ghazālī divided the discussion on God's names into four. The first regards names that designate God's essence, such as the Existent.⁴¹⁴

The second group includes names that designate essence to the addition of a negation, such as the anteriorly eternal, which negates any precedent to God, or the posteriorly eternal, which negates His essence is succeeded, or the negation of any need for a partner and so on.

Third are names that designate existence alongside additional attributes, such as the seven attributes. These names must be understood as eternal as well.

Fourth, some names designate existence in relation to God's acts. These names are disputed to be either eternal or occurrent.⁴¹⁵ The dispute is not major, but it emerged on account of the different angles or perspectives in viewing God's acts.⁴¹⁶ In clarifying this, al-Ghazālī categorized God's acts into two concepts: potential and actual. For instance, a sword that is still in a sheath is a potential cutter. However, it is only actualized when it cuts. Similarly, God is known as the provider in the eternal sense in a potential way. God is only the provider in an actualized manner, when His servants are receiving God's providence.⁴¹⁷ Therefore, this solves the dispute of affirming eternal or occurrent.

The Mu'tazilite and other philosophers denied that by affirming God's oneness and unity of essence it would be impossible to associate Him with multiple eternal essences. His knowledge is sempiternal (*azali*). As for His names, which are derived

⁴¹⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 216-217

⁴¹⁵ The dispute originated from the time when His acts take place as these names are related to His creations that continuously happen. Thus, if God is known as the provider, how can He be known as a provider in eternity when He is yet to provide?

⁴¹⁶ See Toha Dusuqi al-Hubaisyi, *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhi fī Fikrī al-Imām al-Ghazālī*. 325

⁴¹⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 217

from His actions, such as creator (*khaliq*), raising one (*mu'izz*) and lowering one (*mudhill*), are not agreed upon as having an eternal existence.⁴¹⁸

Al-Ghazālī explicated further the relation of these attributes to humans. Man can possibly be characterized by these attributes and names. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish the peculiar properties of the meaning with which they refer to God and to humans. Similarities of attributes between humans and God can only be achieved in likeness with respect to general names, which do not connote absolute likeness.⁴¹⁹

He stated that the name Allah is the greatest name of all and cannot be used for any other except God. God Himself made His essence known as Allah, the one who is qualified for lordship. Al-Ghazālī emphasized cleansing God's name with virtues unlike other virtues and existence unlike others. Other names, such as al-Rahman and al-Rahim differ from Allah, as Allah encompasses the entirety of His essence and attributes and flawlessly refers to His most perfect nature. Whereas, each of His other names specifies single meanings or attributes. Al-Ghazālī also warned of applying the term Allah to other gods metaphorically or literally. The case is different with other names that are attributable to other beings in different contexts.⁴²⁰

In sum, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī elaborated the names of God in a contextual debate adjacent to an argument on attributes. Al-Ghazālī firmly emphasized a strict rule on applying names to God, as there are names not suitable for God while some are intended directly to quiddity and some reflect non-being, such as His essential attributes like the creator and provider. Adjacent to the attributes, al-Ghazālī affirmed that names are also derived from His attributes that designate God's essence,

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*, 195

⁴¹⁹ Stade, Robert Charles. *Ninety-Names of God in Islam* (Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1970), 66-70

⁴²⁰ *Ibid*, 216

His essence with negation, His essence with the essential attributes and lastly, His essence in relation to His acts.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, al-Ghazālī explicated the attributes in three main points. First, affirming attributes of God is necessary to distinguish His eternal essence from the regression of His actions. This has been central to the discussion in contrast to the Mu'tazilite as well as philosophers who proposed a similar position for all attributes to God's essence. Al-Ghazālī categorized three groups of attribute perspectives. One group is the philosophers who argue that essence alone denotes all meanings, such as the Creator, He Himself is knowledge, power, life, and so on. Secondly, the Mu'tazilite and some Karamiyyah claimed there is no limitation or differences between the attributes. Third, there is a middle path that emphasizes the differences of God's attributes from His essence.

Al-Ghazālī also highlighted that God's eternal attributes differ from the regression of the result of His attributes. As an example, God's speech, which resulted in the present day Qur'an, does not incur negating God's eternity. For the attributes denote God's existence, which remains eternal despite the result of His attributes and actions. Al-Ghazālī created a formula of attaching (*ta'alluq*) God's attributes and regressions. He therefore addressed the subject of linking God's eternal essence with the regressive contingent results of His power.

The theory of attaching God's essential attributes to the objects of attributes certainly displays coherence in understanding the relation between God's attributes and the objects of His attributes. God is therefore alive with His life, knowing with knowledge, omnipotent with power, willing with will, speaking with speech, listening with hearing and seeing with sight. Thus, all of these attributes subsist in His essence

and regress objects of attributes without entailing any occurrences to God's essence. These attributes only attach to the objects of His creation in expressing God's omnipotence.

Secondly, al-Ghazālī elaborated seven essential attributes of God, namely power, will, knowledge, life, sight, hearing and speech. Al-Ghazālī negated attributes that are incompatible with God while at the same time affirming His eternity, immortality and oneness as opposed to contingency, mortality and plurality. These attributes, which were later coined as negative attributes, remove deficiencies from God's being and essence. Al-Ghazālī distinguished negative (*salbiyyah*) from essential (*ma'nawiyyah*) attributes, reminding that these are nothing like the essential attributes that are superadded to God's eternal essence.

Thirdly, al-Ghazālī highlighted the concept of applying names to God that either reflect His essence directly or reflect His essential attributes and actions. Thus, it is evident that al-Ghazālī believed that God's names are derived from His attributes, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

All and all, al-Ghazālī strictly emphasized that God's attributes are eternal and subsist in His eternal essence, but differ from His essence and the regression of His attributes that are contingents, demonstrating His active relation to human beings.

4.2 Attributes of God According to Maimonides

Similar to anthropomorphism, the Jewish Scriptures describe God as possessing various attributes, for instance 'God heard,' 'God saw,' 'God spoke' and 'God wrote.' For Maimonides, these notions certainly imply God's corporeality. Besides, the connotations of 'power,' 'life' and 'knowledge' help humans understand the meanings of those attributes, which consequently imply a corporeal God. Therefore, in

addressing this subject, Maimonides rigorously affirmed that God's unity repudiates any understanding of His corporeality in terms of associating attributes with God. His repudiation is set in three stages. First, attributes are defined as accidents. Second, essential attributes such as life, knowledge, power and will are labelled as attributes of action. Third, the theory of negative attributes is developed. Moreover, Maimonides also elaborated on the application of God's names.

4.2.1 The Position of Attributes to God's Essence

Maimonides considered attributes as an element superadded to essence. Attributes associated with an object denote two possibilities. First, it is the essence of the object itself, in which case, an attribute is only a repetition or explanation of a name. For instance, 'man is man' or 'man is a speaking animal.' Second, an attribute is a superadded element to an object.⁴²¹ This is considered an accident for everything that is superadded to the essence of the object, which does not form the essential part of essence, hence forming plurality.⁴²² Thus, it contradicts the principle of the unity of God. Maimonides therefore believed that an attribute is neither God's essence nor an element superadded to His essence.

To Maimonides, those who believe that God is one but possesses many attributes are declaring unity by speaking plurality but in thought. Belief is supposed to be verbalized externally and apprehended internally. Maimonides further affirmed that belief has to come after true apprehension, which entails conviction that the existent exists in our mind, which is actually in reality beyond our mind. This is because true

⁴²¹ It can be observed that Maimonides' term for complexity or composition is the same term used for the syntax or mode of language. Thus, the true oneness in the mental representation of God that Maimonides demanded is breached by any representation that contains even the simplest syntactic structure. Stern. 'Maimonides' Epistemology' In *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*. 125. See also Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 87

⁴²² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 68

conviction eliminates the illogical explanation of belief and deviation from the correct one.⁴²³

Thus, to define attributes through logical reasoning, Maimonides forwarded five different possibilities in defining attributes in relation to God. These possibilities were obviously extracted from Aristotle's logic, which explicates the categories of names.⁴²⁴ First, the object is described by its definition through affirmative attributes. For example, God lives and has reason. This is impossible because there are no causes for His existence and therefore God cannot be defined.⁴²⁵

Second, an object is described by part of its definition. For instance, man is a living being or a rational being. Both are definitions of man and are related. If God is described in this way, it is understood that God has multiple essences, as we tend to divide His essence. Therefore, it is the same as the preceding point.⁴²⁶

Next, an object is described by something different from its essence, referring to God's quality or modality (*kayfiyyah*) of essence. Maimonides lamented on how someone can deny the quality of God's essence while suggesting unity, whose quality, on the contrary, causes accidents. Moreover, a positive attribute either consists of its own essence or contains a quality of the object. Maimonides then outlined four kinds of quality in order to show that this class of attributes cannot be associated with God: (a) intellectual or moral qualities or conditions regarding the attributes' animate being, (b) physical qualities, (c) passive qualities and emotions, and (d) quantity of qualities. Maimonides noted that intellectual and physical qualities will lead to physical conditions. God is not an animate being who needs to attain a certain nature of the soul

⁴²³ *Ibid.* 67

⁴²⁴ See Aristotle. *The Categories*. E. M. Edghill (Trans). (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 2002)

⁴²⁵ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 72

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.* 73

or physical states such as emotions and health. It is likewise in terms of the quantity of God's essence, such as long or short.⁴²⁷

Fourth, attributes are described by their relation to other things, such as time, space or individuals. God cannot be attributed with time or space, as time leads to motion and accidents, hence causing anteriority (*taqaddum*) and posteriority (*taa'khkhour*). Besides, time or space also entail motion, and motion only occurs to material objects, similar to space, which implies bodily figures and would contradict God's immaterial essence.⁴²⁸

Fifth, attributes are described through action. This is certainly not related to the inherent talent or capacity (*malakah*) of a certain work, as expressed in 'carpenter,' 'painter' and 'smith,' for it reiterates the qualities mentioned above. However, different attributes that do not describe the creator can be devoted to the essence of God, which also does not imply substance of His essence.⁴²⁹ Maimonides used an example of Zayd who made a door, built a wall, etc. This demonstrates God's relation to His creations through their nature of existence. Thus, attributes that can be associated with God are attributes that describe His multitude of actions and which do not imply superadded elements and multiple essences.⁴³⁰

Maimonides' refutation of attributes is evident in his strict principle of God's unity and necessary existence, which was adopted from Avicenna's framework.⁴³¹ Although the Scriptures mention attributes describing God, Maimonides argued they

⁴²⁷ *Ibid*

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*, 70-71

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*, 72

⁴³⁰ Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 43

⁴³¹ In Avicenna's framework, God as the necessary existent is a simple being who must not possess attributes. Instead, the affirmation of God's unity and His relation with man are manifested through the theory of intellect, which affirms God to be the Intellect, Intelligen and the Intelligible. Therefore, God is considered one and is not multiple in essence. S. Pines. *The Philosophic Sources of The Guide of the Perplexed*. Xciv. See also Diesendruck, Z. "Maimonides' Theory of the Negation of Privation". *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 6 (1934 - 1935). 139-151

should be perceived as His actions of utmost perfection.⁴³² His stance is derived from Moses' act, who asked God for knowledge of His attributes and His essence. God replied "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee" (ib.19). Here, Maimonides interpreted 'goodness' as reflecting God's act of creation. Through His creation, humans perceive and eventually subscribe God with attributes like 'merciful.'⁴³³ Here it can be seen that Maimonides attempted to relate God to creation through His will and power, which describe attributes of God's acts.

Maimonides took his stance on God's attributes as subscribed by the Torah with the principle "*The Torah speaks in the language of man,*" as similar qualities describe God and all beings. Nevertheless, they are essentially attributes to qualify God's actions without any reference to His essence and indicate absolute perfection. Maimonides supported those who believe that "God is omnipotent by His essence, wise by His essence, living by His essence and endowed with a will by His essence."⁴³⁴ It is perceived to denote that God's single essence to create multiple different actions at the same time does not imply any compounds to His essence.

4.2.2 Essential and Negative Attributes

Upon elaborating various opinions on attributes, Maimonides only agreed with the last opinion, which relates attributes to actions. To Maimonides, attributes should not be related to God's essence, as it would tarnish His perfect and simple being. Not all attributes can be regarded as God's attributes in a relational form between God and man, because Maimonides claimed that there is in truth no relation in any respect between God and any of His creations as there is no relation between God, time and

⁴³² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 72

⁴³³ *Ibid*, 76

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*

place.⁴³⁵ God and man are totally different. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the existing relationship between man and God, a relation described in the Scriptures as showing God's mercy to man. Hence, Maimonides proposed four essential attributes of God – life, power, wisdom and will, which are not relational to God but essential to Him beside His relation with man.

Despite rejecting the idea of God possessing attributes, Maimonides affirmed these four attributes can explain the relation between man and God, and thus considered them essential. However, Maimonides did not simply regard these attributes as elements superadded to God's essence as the Muslim theologian he strongly refuted did.⁴³⁶ Maimonides rather considered these attributes as God's actions and that are not related directly to His essence. These attributes are only acknowledged as demonstrating God's relation with man. According to Maimonides, wisdom and life in reference to God are not different from each other, because in every being that is conscious of itself life and wisdom are the same thing. For instance, by wisdom we understand the consciousness of self. Besides, the subject and object of consciousness are identical (regarding God).⁴³⁷

God is therefore a simple essence with no additional elements.⁴³⁸ He created the universe and knows it without any extraneous force. It makes no difference

⁴³⁵ *Ibid*, 71

⁴³⁶ This is opposed to Muslim theologians, specifically the Ash'arite, who adopted the notion that the essential attributes are other than His essence but subsist in His essence. Refer to al-Ghazālī's discussion on this matter in 4.1.2.

⁴³⁷ Maimonides rejected the idea that His essence contains an element through which He has knowledge of His creatures, an element by which He has will and an element by which He has power. He is therefore a simple essence with no additional elements. He created the universe and knows it but not by any extraneous force. There is no difference whether these various attributes refer to His actions or relations between Him and His works, as they exist only in man's thought (denying the existence of attributes). Ironically, Muslim theologians take these attributes as different relations between God and His creatures, signifying power in creating things, will in giving existence to things as He desires and wisdom in knowing what He created. Consequently, these attributes only express relations between God and His creatures and not His essence. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 74.

⁴³⁸ Thus, God is not composed of an element that apprehends and another that does not apprehend. He is unlike man who is a combination of a conscious soul an unconscious body. If therefore by wisdom it is meant the faculty of self-consciousness, wisdom and life are one and the same things. However, wisdom is not mentioned in a sense similar to humans' wisdom, but it refers to God's power to apprehend His

whether the various attributes refer to God's actions or relations between Him and His works, as they exist only in the thought of man (denying the existence of attributes). Unfortunately, according to Maimonides the error in discussion among Muslim theologians is in viewing these attributes as different from God's essence, which subsequently implies the multiplicity of His essence.

Maimonides further asserted that it is essential to provide logical proof of man's knowledge of God. Only through logical demonstration can one affirm the existence and unity of God. Maimonides outlined four elements that cannot be attributed to God in providing proof, namely corporeality, emotion or change, non-existence and similarity to any of His creatures. If the arguments of proof certainly lead to these four elements, they must therefore be rejected.⁴³⁹ And if attributes are predicated, they will eventually entail all the inadmissible elements named above.⁴⁴⁰

The essential attributes such as existence, life, power, wisdom and will are known to be associated with humans too. Discerning the attributes between God and humans is the most important rule in describing God. According to Maimonides, two different entities cannot be compared on the same level despite the comparison being done to express the difference between the attributes of God and humans.⁴⁴¹ The similarities between the attributes of God and humans are therefore homonyms.⁴⁴² Maimonides refuted the theologians who found similarities between the attributes of God and man as it is inadmissible to perceive God's essence as consisting of

creatures. There is also no doubt that power and will do not exist in God in reference to Himself, but they both exist in reference to His creatures. *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 78

⁴⁴⁰ Attributes would lead to God possessing accidents, which would then entail changes in God and so God would become similar to man.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77

⁴⁴² Homonyms are also known as equivocal. They are defined as terms predicated of two things, between which there is no likeness at all. For instance the term bat can refer to a bird and also a wooden object to hit a ball. Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 43

superadded elements the same way that man's attributes are superadded and accidental. It is definitely impossible to ascribe accidents to God.

Maimonides further refuted the Muslim theologians who claimed that God lives with the attribute of life, knows with the attribute of knowledge, is omnipotent with the attribute of omnipotence, and is wise with the attribute of wisdom, which will reduce His unity and entail plurality. Maimonides repeatedly affirmed that God possesses an absolute unity whose existence is not affected by accidents.⁴⁴³ God is one but does not possess the attribute of unity. The term 'first' is relative, which subject to time causes accidents and motion and is eventually connected to 'body' -- something contradictory to God's incorporeality.⁴⁴⁴ According to Maimonides, all attributes, such as 'first' and 'last' as mentioned in the Scriptures in reference to God should be taken in a metaphorical sense and not be subjected to any changes or innovations.

Hence, it is observed that according to Maimonides, God's life, power, will and knowledge neither reflect His attributes nor His essence. These attributes, however, reflect God's actions and relation with His creations. As he mentioned,

"A thing is described by its action ... this kind of attribute is separate from the essence of the thing described and therefore the most appropriate to be employed in describing the Creator, especially since we know that these different actions do not imply that different elements must be contained in the substance of the agent by which the different actions are produced."⁴⁴⁵

From the above quote, it can be summed that Maimonides totally rejected associating attributes with God's essence. For instance, if one says Zayd carpentered the door, such claim does not assert any multiplicity of action. Talking about Zayd's actions does not imply anything about his essence. Similarly, when one talks about

⁴⁴³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 80

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 81

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 72

God's action and His object of the action, it does not reflect any of His essence and should not be predicated by man.⁴⁴⁶

Maimonides also emphasized that diversity of effect does not imply any change within the agent. For instance, fire, which can be used to cook, melt and for various other purposes with different kinds of things, does not imply any composition of the fire itself. Similarly, God acts through His will, power, knowledge and life, meaning there is multiplicity of His essence.⁴⁴⁷ In sum, all four essential attributes only appear in relation to God's creations and are of one simple essence. All other attributes are to be understood as either His divine actions or negative attributes. Take for instance the attribute of speech or writing. It is clear that God speaks not with the attribute of speaking nor 'says' with the attribute of saying. The same case applies to using any bodily parts such as the mouth or tongue, which would contribute to God's corporeality similar to humans. This automatically denies any form of sound or voice in producing any sort of speech or words by God, as God's speech is undeniably different from humans. Maimonides denied that God's speech is part of the attributes, as speech entails the idea of created speech and it would thus connote the plurality of His essence.⁴⁴⁸

Maimonides argued that speech should be considered an action just like other attributes. He added that it is essential for the mind to perceive that the Prophets received commands and guidance from the Divine Being, and were bestowed with Divine Knowledge. Therefore, it is proven that God's action of speaking is basically related to the Prophets. The notion of God speaking is apprehended through His will,

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 72

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁴⁸ Some Jewish theologians claimed that God's speech is similar to His other creations. God as the Agent produced the work and brought upon speech to existence in terms of words, such as the Torah. See Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 97.

desire and thought, as delineated in the Scriptures.⁴⁴⁹ In order to prove the existence of God's actions of speaking, desire and thinking, His actions and commands are produced. Through His will and wishes, God 'said' and this verse must be taken figuratively without denoting any corporeality of God. The action took place after the command and 'saying' happened, which led to the action of production. This was shown by Maimonides through highlighting the verse "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*" (Psalms 33: 6). It is clear that God's word and sayings are figurative, just like His breath and mouth. To Maimonides, this verse implicitly proves God's existence through His will and desire.⁴⁵⁰ Besides speaking, writing is another attribute that is closely related to Writing is also considered an action and not one of God's attributes.

Apart from relating attributes to actions, Maimonides' affirmative stance on the unity and incorporeality of God entails negating the predication of attributes to God. By negating elements or negative attributes as being related to God, one will attain better understanding of God.

Maimonides highlighted that ascribing corporeality to God is worse than idolatry.⁴⁵² When attributes are ascribed to God, an understanding of a corporeal God will emerge. Thus, logical argumentation, such as the theory of negative attribution,

⁴⁴⁹ The verse reflecting thought is "*And thy heart shall speak (yedabber)*" (Proverbs 23: 33) and the verse reflecting will and desire is "*Do you desire (omer) to kill me?*" (Exodus 2: 14). Both verses prove that will or desire and thought are homonyms of His actions of speaking and saying.

⁴⁵⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 97

⁴⁵¹ A verse which describes God's writing is for instance "*And the writing was the writing of God*" (Exodus 32:16). This verse then leads to the figurative of God's action of writing that mentions His fingers in the process of action "*written with the fingers of God*" (Exodus 31:18). This explicitly describes the analogous form of writing. Moreover, the attribute of writing is also closely related to the homonym of working, as mentioned in the verse "*And the tables were the work of God*" (Exodus 32:16). His attribute of speaking is similar to His writing, which precedes from His divine will and desire. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 98

⁴⁵² Rynhold, Daniel. *An Introduction to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. 80. See also Maimonides' *Responsa*, trans. Joshua Blau, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Meqitsei Nirdamim, 1989), 200

was observed by Maimonides as a strong tool in arguing against physical description.⁴⁵³

By tracing the emergence of negative theology, Philo (20BC-50CE) was found to be among the earliest philosophers who rejected real attributes, which was deduced from the scriptural reasoning of the unlikeness of God. This theory was later adopted by Greek and Christian philosophers and followed by some Muslim theologians, the Mu'tazilite.⁴⁵⁴ In the case of Maimonides, it seems probable that it was Ibn Sīnā who conferred upon negative theology and thus may have also utilized Neo-Platonic writings.⁴⁵⁵

Maimonides explained that our intellect is not capable of attaining perfect comprehension of God's existence. This is due to the perfection of His existence and the deficiency of our intellect. God's existence has no causes for which He can be known. Maimonides argued that human comprehension of God is limited to negations, for example negations of finitude, ignorance, plurality, corporeal existence, and so forth. Humanely terms such as 'knowledge,' 'justice,' 'benevolence' and 'will' in speaking of God are equivocal.⁴⁵⁶ Such terms do not have the same meaning when predicated of human beings as they do when applied to God. In the *Guide*, with regard to the application of predicates of God, Maimonides wrote:

Between our knowledge and His knowledge there is nothing in common, as there is nothing in common between our essence and His essence. With regard to this point, only the equivocality of the term "knowledge" occasions the error; for there is a community only in the terms, whereas in the true reality of things there is a difference. It is from this that incongruities follow necessarily, as

⁴⁵³ This was especially needed during his time when rabbinic anthropomorphism was ridiculed by so called 'rationalist' scholars such as the Karaite and Muslim theologians.

⁴⁵⁴ Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *Repercussion of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy*. (US: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3-4. Negative theology can be traced to Plotinus and it appears by Jewish Neoplatonic scholars such as Solomon Ibn Gabirol based on the notion of God's infinity. Wolfson, Elliot. "Via Negativa in Maimonides and its Impact on Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah" In *Maimonidean Studies* Vol 5. Arthur Hyman & Alfred L. Ivry (eds). (New Jersey: Yeshiva University) 399

⁴⁵⁵ Pines. The Philosophic Sources of the Guide of the Perplexed. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides, Xcv-xcvi.

⁴⁵⁶ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 78-79

we imagine that things that obligatorily pertain to our knowledge pertain also to His knowledge.⁴⁵⁷

Negative attributes repudiate any plurality and convey the highest possibility of God. This is to achieve knowledge of God that is free from any human perception. The examples given by Maimonides are such as incorporeal, first, power, wisdom and will. 'Incorporeal' needs to be negated, for instance by saying that it is unlike the heavens, which are a material being. Next, 'first' should negate His existence due to any cause. As for power, wisdom and will, He is neither weak nor ignorant and manages His productions in an orderly manner without abandoning them. Maimonides observed that human knowledge is insufficient to truly comprehend God. Thus, it is only through God's actions or negative attributes that humans can apprehend the attributes predicated of Him.⁴⁵⁸

Maimonides' negative theology was a strategy for preserving the utter and complete uniqueness of God while not being rendered utterly silent and inarticulate with regard to God and divine attributes. Through the created order, we understand that God is wise, benevolent, all-powerful, eternal, one, and unchanging. However, we must be careful in how we use language about God, because the unity of God's nature implies that predicating multiple attributes of God is already an error unless understood through negative theology.

Meanwhile, in apprehending God in relation to negative theology, Maimonides distinguished one's knowledge from another's. To him, the depth of knowledge depends on the quantity of negation predicated of God. He explained his argument through examples of four different people's understanding of God. First, one said that God is incorporeal. The second said he is doubtful whether God is corporeal or

⁴⁵⁷ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 292

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 83

otherwise. The third said that God is corporeal. Lastly, the fourth said that God has no emotions, as it is impossible for Him to possess emotions. Here, the fourth apparently had the closest knowledge of God, as he was convinced by proof and negated elements from God.⁴⁵⁹ Maimonides observed that each time one negates something relating to God, that person will come closer to apprehending Him.

In contrast, the more attributes one predicates of God, the further one will get from knowing the real God. Maimonides mentioned two consequences to affirming attributes to God. First, the attributes that one asserts are within their intellectual bounds and are flawless according to his/her limited thinking. Second, affirming attributes leads to adding elements to God's essence. Therefore, predicating attributes of God will not lead to absolutely perfect apprehension of God, as Maimonides noted "God should not be the object of human comprehension, that none but only Himself comprehends what He is and that our knowledge consists in knowing that we are truly unable to comprehend Him."⁴⁶⁰

He then continued to explain that the only attributes mentioned by Moses in the Pentateuch are God the great, valiant, terrible, mighty, strong, tremendous and powerful. These attributes could only be mentioned in prayer for two reasons. First, they occur in the Scriptures and second, they were incorporated into prayer by the prophets.⁴⁶¹ By ascribing attributes to God in our language of intellect is the same as considering God a familiar object that can be spoken, described and imagined. Here, Maimonides again asserted that it is not necessary to predicate attributes of God besides the attributes posited by the Prophets or which are considered His actions or

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 84

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid*

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid*, 85. Obviously, as a rabbi, Maimonides was obligated to pray three times a day in the generally known anthropomorphic language of rabbinic Judaism. Therefore, Maimonides certainly had to make some concessions to this 'looseness of expression.' Rynhold. *An Introduction to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. 93. See also Lobel, Diana. "Silence Is Praise to You: Maimonides on Negative Theology, Looseness of Expression, and Religious Experience." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 76 (1) 2002. 25-49

negations of attributes. This notion is further supported by Rabbi Haninah's analogy of a king who possessed millions of gold but was instead praised only for possessing silver. According to Maimonides, although these attributes entail perfection to the human mind, they imply defects of God.⁴⁶²

Maimonides concluded by stating a verse on silence from the book of Psalms, which is deemed to be the highest praise that can be given to God rather than applying any attributes to God that may possibly produce offensive expressions.⁴⁶³ For Maimonides, the issue is not the lack of concepts in representing God's power, knowledge, benevolence and so forth. It is because God completely transcends every created entity and conception available to human reason that in attempting to describe God man is silenced. Man knows that God exists, is one and is eternal via revelation. Anything else to be said about God can only be said by describing the effects of God's activity.

In distinguishing between positive and negative attributes, Maimonides elaborated on the conformity of proof. Positive attributes, according to him, lead to a non-existent thing that is a mere innovation and fiction. On the other hand, negative attributes lead to certainty of the existent. For instance, saying that God has knowledge could consist of possibilities of change. Therefore, admitting that His knowledge is unlike human knowledge and His existence is unlike human life is more convincing. Negation would not entail a true conception of attributes, for the truth is beyond human capability of grasping⁴⁶⁴. On the contrary, through affirming attributes, one will

⁴⁶² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 87

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, 85

⁴⁶⁴ Maimonides ascribed this with his analogy of a person who knows that a ship exists but knows nothing of what a ship is. Different individuals will achieve different knowledge depending on their negation in conceiving the truth. Therefore, the inability for man to speak truthfully of God cannot be demonstrated through predicating qualities of God, instead, it must be done through delineating the divine image in one's mind. See Rynhold. *An Introduction to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. 92. See also Burrell, David. *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas*. (University of Notre Dame: Notre Dame. 1986), 64

be led to plurality due to God's many attributes, despite believing in one essence. It will also lead to comparing man and God, and that is certainly inadmissible. Subsequently, one will tend to associate other things to God, which are considered predicated subjects. Although subject and predicate merge into one, both are nevertheless considered two elements. Maimonides did not deny the understanding that attributists have about God, but their belief in His unity would be subsequently misled. Their understanding of God errs due to associating God with plurality (in affirming attributes).⁴⁶⁵

It can be concluded that Maimonides' affirmation of four essential attributes of God as actions and other features as negative attributes demonstrates his firm emphasis on God's unity and incorporeality.

4.2.3 Names of God

Pertaining to attributes, Maimonides also addressed the names of God while strongly elucidating His unity. According to Jewish teaching, God's name is Tetragrammaton, which constitutes four letters, YHWH. It particularly refers to God alone and is directed towards His divine being. Unlike His other names that are derived from His actions and may be similar to our own carry equivocal meaning. In sanctifying His name, it is important not to pronounce it outside congregational prayers or by anyone except for priests.⁴⁶⁶ Hence, Tetragrammaton is substituted with *Adonai* which means lordship (Gen 42:30). *Adonai* also exists in another sense that connotes the meaning 'my chief,' whereas *Adonai* also means 'my lord.' The same applies for *Sarri* (my

⁴⁶⁵ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 88

⁴⁶⁶ Byrne, Maire. *The Names of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: A Basis for Interfaith Dialogue*. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 22

prince) and *Sarai* (Abraham's wife) (Gen 12:17). Maimonides mentioned that *Adonai* similarly refers to angels besides God (Gen 8:3).⁴⁶⁷

Next, it is essential to distinguish between Tetragrammaton and other names that are derivative words. YHWH basically refers to the necessary existence of God, while other derivative names denote His actions. Other derivative names do not imply His simple substance but that His essence is composed of attributes. As mentioned before, attributes connote superadded substance to God's essence, therefore connoting multiplicity and voiding His unity. The derived names are thus to be related to God's actions or in paving the way for the mind to apprehend His perfection. It is essential to understand that the initial name of God is only one. In Zechariah 14:9 it says "*In that day shall the Lord be one and His name one.*" Maimonides then quoted Rabbi Eliezer: "*Before the world was created, there was only the Holy One, blessed be He and His name.*"⁴⁶⁸ It can be comprehended here that His original name is one, but due to God's relation with His creations, derivatives came about to offer a better way for humans to comprehend God through His derivative actions. The derivatives are certainly aimed towards the universe, as it only emerged after creation. If all derivative actions were separated from His essence, there would only be YHWH. It must be taken into serious consideration that Tetragrammaton is the only real name as mentioned in the Scriptures, "*And they shall put My name that is My name that is peculiar to Me*" (Numbers 6:27).

According to Maimonides, Tetragrammaton YHWH can signify three forms of God. First is His name, as the Scripture mentions "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*" (Exodus 20:7) "*And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord*" (Leviticus 24:16). Secondly, it reflects His essence and true reality. For instance "*And*

⁴⁶⁷ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 90

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid*,

they shall say to me: What is His name?" (Exodus 3:13). This reflects the story of when Moses first preached to his people. Thirdly, it signifies His commands or words, such as *"For My name is within him"* (Exodus 23:21). Maimonides then elucidated further by giving similes of the glory of God, which can connote multiple meanings including His light, His essence and His honor.

It was also essential for Maimonides to remind people not to create any names. There are people who like to create amulets using derivative names of God and tend to have power to act upon something bad or defend someone against bad. Some also believe that pronouncing God's name can do miracles. The four sacred letters of Tetragrammaton are believed to be only pronounced once a week by a priest who teaches his students or sons. In dealing with daily having to pronounce God, Jews must use six letter words like *Adonai* to substitute for YHWH, or even a 42 letter word. It is essential to differentiate between the multiple types of names, as God's name is closely related to the unity of His essence. The four letter word of the articulated name of God directly refers to His one and only essence. Whereas the 12 and 42 letter words, in Maimonides' opinion, surely connote more than the essence, and also His metaphysical explanation. In order to attain knowledge of this 42 letter word, one has to undergo training and learning. It is possible to deviate if in pursuit of knowledge of these multiple letters one tries to be innovative beyond a limit, subsequently leading to innovations and falsehood.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, Maimonides firmly rejected associating attributes with God. He perceived attributes as accidents that would deny God's unity and incorporeality. His stance was not unlike the Mu'tazilite of the Muslim theologians who refuted attributes, although they were not on the same page when it comes to claims that God 'knows' with His

essence. Nevertheless, similar to the Mu'tazilites, he agreed upon claiming that the four essential attributes of life, wisdom, power and will are intertwined and similar to each other.

As a result of refuting the attributes, Maimonides took the extreme way of negating all qualities from God in order to preserve His divinity. We can say that God is gracious or that God is powerful or merciful, as long as we remain mindful that these phrases describe attributes of the world and do not directly refer to God. Thus, one can speak of features of God's actions but not God's attributes. To speak of attributes would be to speak of properties of God, which is beyond human knowledge and impossible to perceive. Thus, utter silence regarding God is the best way to speak about Him. The use of human language in speaking about God is equivocal in relation to the use of language in speaking of other things. That is, language is neither univocal nor analogical with its use in other contexts.

In elucidating God's name in His simple essence, however, Maimonides explicated that from a more profound perspective, God's name consists of His name, word and command. According to Maimonides, true glorification of the Lord entails comprehending His greatness by glorifying and magnifying God in words and expressing what one has received from His command.

Maimonides' solution is for one to be able to comprehend and describe features of the created order, features of what God has brought about or what God has done. Things predicated of the world are not also predicated of God. Rather, the created order reflects graciousness and benevolence, which is distinct from God who is the cause of each created being.

4.3 Comparative Analysis on the Attributes and Names of God

With respect to the above discussion, several comparisons can be made between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on God's attributes. The analysis will be deduced into three main discussions: the position of attributes, the essential attributes and the names of God.

4.3.1 The Position of Attributes to God's Essence

In the discourse on attributes with reference to God's essence, it can be observed that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides had contradicting opinions. Al-Ghazālī accepted attributes as superadded to God's essence. Maimonides on the other hand rejected the notion of superadded attributes. This divergence stems from the debate on the essence of attributes itself. Al-Ghazālī completely distinguished between God's attributes and man's, while Maimonides perceived the concept of attributes as being somewhat similar to man's when he claimed that attributes of God are also accidents as man's attributes. Although Maimonides denied univocal understanding and affirmed an equivocal perception of God, he could not affirm that attributes are part of God's essence, as he strongly acknowledged a simple essence of God. To Maimonides, attributes will only cause compositeness to God's essence as they are considered accidents. This is unacceptable to Maimonides because corporeality implies changes to the essence. As God is the first mover, He must not be affected by any changes. The attributes that He possesses must be in a state of potential first before they are actualized. Whereas, God must be sanctified from any potential and actual and thus cannot be associated with attributes.

In affirming that God's attributes are not accidents, al-Ghazālī had earlier established the categorization of existence by which God is indirectly nullified from any form of occurrences. First, there is an existence that requires space but is non-divisible which is termed single substance (*jawhar fard*). Secondly, existence that requires space and is divisible is termed body (*jism*). Third, existence that does not require any space and is a body is known as accident (*'arad*). Lastly, existence that does not require any space or body is God Himself. Thus, from this categorization of existence, God is certainly nullified from any accident as an accident consists of bodily figures while God is an incorporeal God. In al-Ghazālī's discussion, his emphasis on attributes is mostly highlighted as part of positioning a correct understanding in the relation between a creator and creation.

The concept of attributes held by al-Ghazālī also strongly supports God's unity and eternity. Al-Ghazālī emphasized three important characters of God's essential attributes in sanctifying God's. First, the attributes are superadded. Second, they are eternal. Third, they subsist in His essence.

It is important to note that al-Ghazālī emphasized God's unity despite attributing God with qualities. He claimed that the term Allah refers to His essence along with His attributes. His essence cannot be separated from His divine attributes. It is likewise impossible to claim that Zayd's hand is something other than Zayd, because part of what is included in the name would not be something other than what comes under the name. Therefore, Zayd's hand is neither himself nor is it something other than Zayd. Any other part is neither something other than the whole nor is it the whole by itself. Therefore, the attributes must be something other than the essence in which the attributes subsist.

Meanwhile, Maimonides believed that the attributes must either be the essence of the object itself or an accident. Both are clearly inadmissible in reference to God. If

it is claimed that attributes cannot be God's essence, they must be superadded to His essence, which leads to multiplicity of His essence. It is apparent that Maimonides' concept is in line with the peripetatic philosophers. The philosophers denied ascribing attributes to God, claiming that attributes entail plurality of His essence; they considered attributes to be accidents to His essence, in which case God would be contingent and not eternal.⁴⁶⁹

For Maimonides, it is impossible to know God wholly and only partial attributes can be attributed to Him. This is likewise evident in his attempt to define attributes.⁴⁷⁰ Maimonides admitted that all kinds of attributes being predicated of God in describing His essence in part, or the quality of attributes, are clearly inadmissible in reference to God for they imply composition. Therefore, Maimonides repudiated any sorts of attributes that do not reflect God as a whole perfect being. Maimonides' rejection of affirmative attributes is apparent in his writings. He held a firm stance in dignifying God from any plurality and compositeness through attributes that are deemed accidents. In addition, Maimonides' belief in the unknowability of God is also seen as a core factor in negating qualities of God.

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī emphasized meanings of attributes rather than perceiving God as a partial understanding of His attributes. The argument that attributes are 'meanings' per se, which do not contain any elements and cause multiplicity at the same time, leads to refuting the claim that attributes are accidents to His essence.⁴⁷¹ This was then refuted by Maimonides who disproved the theologians' concept of argument that only emphasized the demonstration of truth within their mind

⁴⁶⁹ This is the argument of the Mu'tazilite and philosophers who refuted attributes. They are known as the Mu'attilah by al-Shahrastānī who repudiated any attributes being ascribed to God. Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, 8

⁴⁷⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 70

⁴⁷¹ Al-Ghazālī in his *Iqtisād* mentioned that it is an attribute that 'implies meaning.' The intended meaning here can be observed as attributes that are additional to the essence of God, they are derived from what God's essence means. Al-Ghazālī iterated that these seven attributes are established to reflect the Godliness of God of the universe and the necessary existent who initiates all occurrents.

as the theologians did, including al-Ghazālī, in understanding the meaning of God's attributes.

This can also be observed in the establishment of the concept of the atom as mentioned by Maimonides. The theologians generally believed that God creates each atom every second while on the other hand the philosophers affirmed the theory of motion where each atom is moved from its potential state to the actual state. The philosophers attempted to exhibit God in the most expressive way through physical demonstration while al-Ghazālī and other theologians distinguished between the order of natural causation and the metaphysical discourse.

The problem with the philosophers' notion is in their attempt to perceive the ontological God logically as it causes contradiction. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand addressed this issue by defending the idea of God's perfection in possessing the attributes. God's perfection lies in His perfect being and actual existence in relation to His essence, which denies imperfection and dependency. Even the attributists who perceive God's knowledge to be different from man's knowledge understand that God's knowledge consists of the following: a) it is one although it embraces plurality; b) it includes even such things that do not yet exist; c) it includes things which are infinite in number; d) it does not change when new objects of perception present themselves; and e) it does not determine the course of events.⁴⁷²

According to al-Ghazālī, due to the philosophers' failure to categorize the essential attributes as meanings superadded to God's essence, they failed to create another layer between God and His creations thus leads to a causal pattern of creation where God becomes the efficient cause to every contingency. As for al-Ghazālī, the eternal essential attributes act as a layer to safeguard God's essence from being nullified with contingencies. It is important to note that in earlier discussions, al-

⁴⁷² M. Friedlander. "Analysis of the Guide for the Perplexed" in *The Guide of the Perplexed*. lviii.

Ghazālī denied God’s corporeality or His association with bodily figures. This is because corporeality would automatically subscribe God to accidents after accidents. Meanwhile, God’s attributes are eternally subsistent and superadded to His essence. Thus, as mentioned above, God’s attributes are neither His essence nor otherwise.

It can be observed that al-Ghazālī’s argument is clearly in line with the Ash‘arite’s attributist method in affirming God’s unity, which is opposed to the Mu’tazilite who also denied that God possesses attributes. In his opinion, ascribing attributes to God would negate His absolute unity. Both Maimonides and the Mu’tazilite were opposed to associating attributes with God. They both refuted ascribing attributes to God, since attributes are contingent while His essence is permanent. In addition, he also employed the Mu’tazilite’s concept of action instead of attributes in referring to God’s power, knowledge, life, speech and others. According to him, attributes entail the plurality of God’s being. Maimonides, however, distinguished himself from the Muslim Mu’tazilite⁴⁷³ through employing Plato’s negative theology. He not only rejected attributes but also negated them totally. To Maimonides, since God’s essence is a subsistent being without attributes superadded to His essence, the divine attributes can only be true through negation or causality. It is either through removing all defects from God (negative attributes) or predicating names of God, as He causes the creaturely reality signified by names (causal interpretation).

Meanwhile, in al-Ghazālī’s notion of negative attributes, he certainly did not deny any affirmative attributes of God. Ironically, al-Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā’* and *Iqtīṣād*

⁴⁷³ This is apparent as Maimonides in his Guide clearly rejected the Kalam argument. His reference to Kalam did not only apply to the Ash‘arite per se. However, it rejected both the Mu’tazilite and Ash‘arite. Moreover, there was not much difference between the Mu’tazilite and the Ash‘arite in affirming God’s existence, His unity and incorporeality and the creation of the universe. They only differed on the subject of attributes and free will of humans. See Wolfson *Repurcussion of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy*. (US: Harvard University Press, 1979). 86

also agreed upon negating weak attributes of God.⁴⁷⁴ However, al-Ghazālī denied God's weaknesses through emphasizing God's eternal attributes, such as eternity (*qidam*), immortality (*baqā'*), oneness (*wahdāniyyah*) and all-sufficiency (*ghaniyy*). All of these attributes must be accompanied by their opposites, such as contingency, mortality, possessing partners and dependence. Those attributes must follow the affirmative attributes, by which negation perpetually accompanies essence.

Apparently, Maimonides' negation of attributes is seen to contradict his own acknowledgement of God as the intellect as well as the subject and object of intellection.⁴⁷⁵ Although Maimonides' statement was much like the philosophers' belief, Maimonides at the same time acknowledged this in his Guide.⁴⁷⁶ Obviously, Maimonides felt that identifying God as the intellect demonstrates affirming attributes to Him, thus contradicting the notion of God's negativity.⁴⁷⁷ The question here is how can Maimonides speak of God as the intellect but at the same time deprive Him of any affirmative attributes? Thus, his affirmation of negative attributes in order to sanctify God's holiness is certainly questionable.

Apart from that, although Maimonides' negative attitude towards ascribing attributes to God might not yield knowledge of the true reality of God, it does indeed lead to realising the fact that this reality cannot be known. Maimonides perhaps felt that silence is ultimately the best option in dealing with ontological issues, because language is inevitably misleading when speaking of God.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 103

⁴⁷⁵ Lobel, Diana. "Silence Is Praise to You: Maimonides on Negative Theology, Looseness of Expression, and Religious Experience" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 76 (1) 2002. 25-49

⁴⁷⁶ See Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 102 "Now when (or since) it is demonstrated that God, may He be held precious and magnified, is an *intellect in actu* and that there is absolutely no potentiality in Him—as is clear and shall be demonstrated—. . . it follows necessarily that He and the thing apprehended are one thing, which is His essence . . . He is always the intellect as well as the subject and object of intellection."

⁴⁷⁷ Kasher, Hannah. "Self-Cognizing Intellect and Negative Attributes in Maimonides' Theology" *The Harvard Theological Review*, 87 (4), 1994. 461-472

In the case of al-Ghazālī's negative attributes (*ṣifāt salbiyyah*), it was only further established in the later period of the Ash'arite scholars.⁴⁷⁸ The negative attributes of God were established in order to strengthen one's belief in God's divinity. Nevertheless, in order to achieve the truth, al-Ghazālī still believed the necessity to affirm God's attributes, which was later followed by negating any imperfection or detrimental of God. Al-Ghazālī's negative attributes, however, were totally different from what Maimonides advocated. By affirming negative attributes, al-Ghazālī did not deny affirming positive attributes, since al-Ghazālī believed God possesses attributes and possessing attributes does not multiply God's essence.

Therefore, it can be observed that Maimonides' discourse on attaining knowledge of God seems vague with his negation of attributes. His turning point in choosing negative attributes to substitute his repudiation of attributes cannot make one achieve eternal truth. In fact, Maimonides himself ultimately admitted that negative attributes do not convey the true notion of being, but instead silence is the best option. Nonetheless, Maimonides as a Rabbi who was obligated to pray three times a day in the basically anthropomorphic language of rabbinic Judaism, did consider making exceptions in predicating attributes of God as long as it is done within prayers and while reading the Torah. This certainly demonstrates his method of harmonizing his philosophical thought with the rabbinic foundation. Besides, Maimonides still recognized those who believe in God's unity and incorporeality despite afflicting God with attributes as monotheists, unlike Christians who believed in idolatry.

All in all, although both scholars strongly advocated God's unity, they had different arguments. Al-Ghazālī's concept of unity included positing attributes to God, whereby God's attributes are certainly different from man. If God did not possess

⁴⁷⁸ The concept of attributes is better known as the 20 attributes of God, which was established by the Ash'arite scholars as mentioned in the first subtopic in al-Ghazālī's explanation of the attributes of God.

attributes, it would further deny the Scriptures, since attributes are clearly stated by God Himself. Similarly, according to the Jewish Bible, Maimonides did not deny the existence of attributes as mentioned by God. However, due to his rigid method of employing logical reasoning in metaphysical discourse, Maimonides overwhelmingly anticipated the philosophers' argument of affirming God's simple being. Maimonides' fundamental principle was that the scripture presents itself in allegorical fashion. Thus, as an alternative, Maimonides and the philosophers rather negated what is not appropriate with respect to God in describing Him.

It can be understood why Maimonides opted for negative theology, which is to portray a unique God who is by no means comparable to man. Al-Ghazālī likewise believed that God is unlike humans despite affirming His attributes. Thus, in knowing God through attributes, al-Ghazālī's argument in affirming God is perhaps more eloquent vis-à-vis the scripture and logical argumentation. By knowing God's attributes, al-Ghazālī attempted to demonstrate there is coherence between God and the objects He created. On the other hand, Maimonides' negation of attributes certainly gives rise to the concept of causation in linking God with the created objects.

In this claim, God's essence becomes the efficient cause. Similarly, in logical connotation, our essence is certainly not an efficient cause of our knowledge. Here, Maimonides' failure to accept God's attributes leads to further problems in understanding God's divinity. It can be summed that due to his rejection of attributes, Maimonides faced two problems: first, knowing God in an affirmative way and secondly, understanding the true relation between God and His creations.

4.3.2 Essential attributes

Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides supported predicating essential attributes to God. Nevertheless, they differed in concept and categorization. Al-Ghazālī believed that essential attributes, namely power, knowledge, living, will, hearing, sight and speech, cannot possibly be absent from God's essence since pre-eternity. In contrast, Maimonides believed God's essential attributes are only a reflection of His actions and only consist of four attributes: life, wisdom, power and will. He considered God's speech to be the result of His will. Also, hearing and sight must be understood homonymously.

In addition, Maimonides regarded all attributes as being construed as one, whereby he understood life to be also known as wisdom. Hence, God possesses power, knowledge, will and life. As for Maimonides, God's living and knowledge are not different from each other; once a being is conscious of its existence through wisdom, it is alive and living. Moreover, Maimonides refuted God's composition of elements that apprehends and another that does not.⁴⁷⁹

In contrary, according to al-Ghazālī, if one argues that God's attributes of power, will, life and knowledge are the same, then they are just repetitions of terms and become useless. And if God possesses only a single attribute, how can His command connote a similar meaning to His prohibition and His prohibition connote a similar meaning to His description?⁴⁸⁰ How can God's power be a similar concept to God's knowledge? Therefore, it is impossible to claim that God possesses one attribute consisting of multiple attributes. Therefore, God's will, life, wisdom and power are different concepts and serve different purposes.

⁴⁷⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 72

⁴⁸⁰ Al-Hubaisiyi, *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhi fī Fikri al-Imām al-Ghazālī*. 309

Maimonides considered attributes to be actions that represent God's relation with humans, apart from symbolizing His perfection. Consequently, he rejected associating attributes with God and instead denoted them as His actions to reflect His relation to human beings. Hence, it can be said what God does but not what God is. Because traits and notions of God might subsist in the plurality of His essence, one needs to be mindful in describing His attributes, which will directly imply multiplicity of His essence. If the philosophers assumed that subscribing attributes to God would modify the notion of God's essence, al-Ghazālī on the other hand argued through the concept of these eternal attributes, which differentiates the eternal existence of attributes with the contingent that occurs as a result of His attributes. In this argument, al-Ghazālī held that God's essential attributes are eternal and merely meanings attached to the objects of attributes as a manifest of the relation between God and His creation. Therefore, God's attributes remain one and eternal, while their product may be diverse and multiply through His actions.

On the other hand, Maimonides believed that God's essence itself produces diverse actions. Maimonides portrayed the metaphor of man's reason, which, being one faculty and implying no plurality, enables him to know many arts and sciences by the same faculty man is able to sow, build, etc. These various acts are results of one simple faculty that involves no plurality.⁴⁸¹ All God's actions are thus perceived to be emanating from His essence and not from any extraneous thing superadded to His essence. This is because according to Maimonides, His essence is the active intellect, He comprehends constantly and consequently. He and the things comprehended are one and the same thing; that is to say His essence and the act of comprehending because of which it is said that He comprehends is the intellect itself and likewise His essence. God is therefore always the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible.

⁴⁸¹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 73

Among other Muslim theologians who negated that God has attributes were the Mu'tazilite. According to them, one who associates attributes to God conforms multiple essences to God and eventually acknowledges two eternal or two Gods. Thus, the Mu'tazilite delineated any form of attributes except for God being omniscient and omnipotent, with Al-Jubba'ie claiming that is the state of God or attributes referring to His essence.⁴⁸² In contrast, the Mu'tazilite did not negate God as entirely as the Ismailite. According to the Ismailite, one must neither affirm nor negate, as they claimed that God neither exists nor does not exist. This applies to other attributes as well. When God grants power or knowledge to others, He is omniscient and omnipotent in such a way as the giver of knowledge and power but not through associating any knowledge or power with Him.⁴⁸³ Maimonides' understanding of attributes is somewhat similar to the Mu'tazilite who negated attributes but at the same time believed that attributes are God's form of acts that transpire from His simple essence.

Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī's version of attribute of action differs from Maimonides. Al-Ghazālī differentiated between essential and other attributes, where essential attributes, namely power, will, knowledge, life, speech, hearing and sight cannot be categorized under attributes of action. These attribute must necessarily subsist in God's essence without implying multiplicity of His essence. These essential attributes entail other attributes, such as God's mercy, generosity and others. According to al-Ghazālī, attributes of action only connote existence in relation to His acts, such as Generous, Sustainer, Creator, etc. The attributes are only associated with God after creation occurs, for instance, leading the attributes to become either eternal or contingent. According to al-Ghazālī, the acts could be eternal if the attributes are

⁴⁸² Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*. 7.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.* 133-134. See also Hasan Mahmud al-Shafie. *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsah 'Ilm al-Kalām*. (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1991), 95

perceived as potential and when the acts occur they are in their actual position. An action could also be contingent if it is predicated of God during the action itself.

The concept of potential and actual has also been pointed out by Maimonides in his discussion on the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. Similarly, al-Ghazālī had also discussed this concept before, but on the essential attributes of knowledge, the knower and the known. However, al-Ghazālī did not relate this concept to the potential and actual in philosophical discourse on causation. This concept merely explains the importance of affirming God's attributes lexically. God, as the knower, must know with His attribute of knowing. This is to deny that any actions take place with God's essence itself, but rather actions must transpire from His attributes. Conversely, Maimonides believed that all God's actions emerge from His simple essence and explained this within the notion of the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. God is knowledge, the knower and the known, where knowledge signifies His power to comprehend, being the knower is His action and being the known occurs when God emanates in every existence.

Returning to al-Ghazālī's discussion on potential and actual regarding the attributes of action, al-Ghazālī only applied this concept to distinguish between the result of God's action and His essence and attributes. For instance, God is known to be generous in the potential or eternal, but His generosity only occurs when the act of giving occurs in reality. Here, it is essential to highlight al-Ghazālī's attempt in preventing God's eternal essence from being affected by any contingencies that occur continuously through affirming a different concept between the essential attributes and attributes of actions.⁴⁸⁴ The essential attributes thus serve as a layer that safeguard God's eternal existence from being nullified by any contingencies in His act of

⁴⁸⁴ Al-Hubaisyi, *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhī fī Fikri al-Imām al-Ghazālī*. 312

creation. Al-Ghazālī's argument clearly provides an intelligible way for humans to grasp a holistic understanding of the relation between the Creator and His creations.

Thus, al-Ghazālī's apprehension of God as possessing essence and attributes, eternal attributes from which countless contingencies emerge that would not multiply with endless occurrences, would ultimately safeguard the notion of the eternity of God's essence and attributes. This is also the concept al-Ghazālī demonstrated in addressing the problem of causality, which occurs due to the philosophers' failure to admit attributes of God.

As a result, Maimonides, who was also in line with the peripetatic philosophers, was seen to adopt Al-Fārābī's identification of the intellect, the act of understanding and understood things, to characterize divine essence.⁴⁸⁵ This leads to an emanative understanding of God, which at the same time affirms the necessary causation adopted by Aristotle. The philosophers' strong influence can be seen further in his concept of negative theology that was established by Plato. It can be observed that Maimonides' synthesis of the philosophers' works was obvious in his attempt to harmonize it with the Scriptures.

In sum, according to both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, the attributes of action signify God's relation to His creation. However, the conflicting point between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides is in understanding the nature of these attributes. Al-Ghazālī strongly emphasized the eternity of the essential attributes. Nonetheless, when it comes to attributes of action, he admitted these can be considered contingent while maintaining God's core attributes that support God's eternity and distinguish Him from His creations. Meanwhile, Maimonides only attempted to relate God's action to creations without safeguarding God's eternity in relation to His contingents.

⁴⁸⁵ Burrell, David. *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Damm, 1986), 64

4.3.3 Names of God

Al-Ghazālī wrote a separate book explicitly on God's names, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fi Syarḥ Ma'āni Asma' Allah al-Husnā*. Maimonides, however, only elaborated on the names of God in the first chapter of his book, *The Guide of the Perplexed*.

Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed that Allah and YHWH refer to God's essence in Islam and Judaism, respectively. Al-Ghazālī claimed that only the term Allah can be predicated of God as a whole, reflecting all His actions and attributes, whereas other attributes or names only describe God's specific acts or attributes. Similarly, Tetragrammaton YHWH refers to His divine being and necessary existence. It basically denotes God's simple being without any attributes subsisting in Him. Obviously, Maimonides was against attributing qualities to God, as this, he believed, would mean God's multiplicity. However, Maimonides believed that God's name consists of His perfection, words and commands. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī claimed that God must possess attributes and believed that names are only manifold reflections of an essence that does not entail plurality. Since God's essence Himself is not a body that consumes space (*jism mutaḥayyiz*), it is impossible for any accidents to subsist in Him.

Apart from that, Tetragrammaton in Judaism holds a special position, whereby the term YHWH cannot be mentioned verbally among the Jewish layman.⁴⁸⁶ Instead, the Jewish must comply with using Adonai as a substitute for YHWH. Apparently, there is no restriction for Muslims pronouncing the term Allah. One thing that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed upon, however, is that God cannot be given just any

⁴⁸⁶ Tetragrammaton has lost its original pronunciation since the Middle Ages, when only religious scholars were allowed to pronounce the letters. The letters were found later on the Mesha Stela in 9BC. Byrne. *The Names of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: A Basis for Interfaith Dialogue*. 22-25

names humans can think of. The names of God must be revelations from God Himself according to the Holy Scriptures.

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī categorized God's derivative names, such as creator and sustainer, under attributes of action. Conversely, Maimonides, who regarded attributes as superadded elements to God's unity, instead preferred that God's derivative names be attributed to His actions per se. Apparently, al-Ghazālī also referred to some of God's names to His actions, such as the creator, which is directly related to contingency. Consequently, these attributes of action can either be considered eternal or contingent by al-Ghazālī. Whereas, Maimonides did not mention whether God's actions are eternal or contingent.

In general, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides affirmed that Allah and YHWH are to be predicated of God's perfect being. Nonetheless, regarding derivative names, al-Ghazālī believed that both attributes and actions should be regarded as God's names. Maimonides, by contrast, only accepted that actions should be adopted as God's names.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

In sum, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on God demonstrates their epistemological question on the knowability of God. To al-Ghazālī, it is possible to attain knowledge of God through comprehending His attributes. Conversely, Maimonides proposed a negative approach, although he admitted this would not facilitate seeing the true reality. Apart from that, their arguments contrasted as their definitions and conceptualization of attributes differ. As a result, Maimonides attested al-Ghazālī's notion of the perfect being of God as a corporeal God who possesses attributes. Al-Ghazālī considered that one who negates attributes will perceive a

defective belief in God. This contrast is apparently due to their different epistemological orientations, where Maimonides was heavily influenced by philosophical argumentation while al-Ghazālī strongly refuted peripatetic scholars' philosophical stance through Ash'arite tradition. The difference is obvious in their argument on the position of attributes vis-à-vis God's essence; al-Ghazālī believed that God's essential attributes subsist in His essence, whereas Maimonides considered God's attributes to be His actions and perceived the attributes mentioned in the Scriptures with a negative understanding. Maimonides held that God is off the scale, while al-Ghazālī believed so too, but nevertheless affirmed that God is wise for instance, but He is the most wise and no one can match His wisdom.

Maimonides' negation of God having attributes, however, excluded the four essential attributes, namely knowledge, power, life and will. These are one and similar to each other as a manifestation of God's actions and relation with man. His negative theology was consequently synthesized with the emanative theory, which demonstrates God's transcendent relation with man. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand demonstrated the purpose of affirming that God has attributes as part of God's relation with man while denying diversity of God's essence during the creation of contingencies. God's eternal attribute serves as the factor that entails creation. For instance, God created the universe with His power. If one negates power from being attributed to God, then it would be impossible for the world to have been created. However, if one assumes that God's power is His essence, this would mean that His essence entails multiplicity when His creation diverges. In contrast, although Maimonides' negation of attributes affirmed God's actions in every creation, his conception of God still led to the emanative theory, which al-Ghazālī refuted.

With respect to God's names, both scholars agreed that only Allah and YHWH represent God's essence as a whole, whereas predicative names only describes God with partial understanding.

To conclude, it can be claimed that in terms of plurality or contingency of God's essence in the discourse on attributes, both arguments affirm God's unity and eternal essence. Nevertheless, from the scriptural perspective, al-Ghazālī's affirmation of attributes while at the same time sanctifying God from plurality and contingency is perhaps more conclusive and closer to what God Himself conveyed through the Scriptures.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 5

THE ACTIONS OF GOD ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZĀLĪ AND MAIMONIDES

5.0 Introduction

This chapter contains a discussion on God's actions vis-à-vis humans' actions. Correct understanding of His actions is important, as they signify a direct relationship between God and the universe, and between God and man. God's regular patterns are what scientists call natural laws. The very basic concept of knowing God is that God is omnipotent and omniscient. Nonetheless, if God is omnipotent, then it is most presumed that God will act in the best possible state of affairs for His creatures. However, the fact that righteous people also suffer cannot be denied. If God is omniscient, then God knows the past, present and future contingents that may affect God's divinity. Therefore, this chapter discusses al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourse on issues such as whether bad things only occur to bad people or to good people too. The discourse also addresses questions on whether God knows and determines man's fate or man himself determines his own fate. The discussion basically covers the notion of good and evil, the will and power of God, and the possible and impossible for God. The concept of God's actions is directly addressed from the perspectives of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides.

5.1 Actions of God According to al-Ghazālī

A discussion on God's actions is extensively explicated in both al-Ghazālī's *Iqtisād* and *Ihyā*. The discourse took a position in mainly refuting the Mu'tazilite's extreme theory of God ascertaining care and well-being unto His servants (*al-ṣalaḥ wa al-*

aṣlah). Al-Ghazālī stressed upon the entirety of God’s acts being possible.⁴⁸⁷ This proposition was clarified in suggesting correct definitions of ‘obligatory,’ ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Besides, al-Ghazālī discussed God’s power and will as part of demonstrating the possibility of His actions. Lastly, this section attempts to deliberate al-Ghazālī’s refutation of God being obligated to carry out necessary acts.

5.1.1 The Concept of Evil

The concept of man’s evil is often related to God’s justice. When man commits evil deeds, one starts to question whether the action was part of God’s action or the person himself is responsible for his own deed. It is evident that confusion arises from the discourse on God’s actions between theologians and philosophers due to the varying interpretations of the concept of good and bad. This leads to other questions, like who determines what is good and bad? And is man’s definition of good and bad similar to that of God’s?

To address this, al-Ghazālī deliberated the fundamental definition of evil itself. Al-Ghazālī explained that evil is something against the purpose of the hereafter. Al-Ghazālī only considered actions that fulfill the purpose of the hereafter as good, otherwise, they are considered bad. Bad is somewhat more specific than good, because whatever opposes good is considered bad. However, a man who does not fear God may think that God’s actions are bad if they do not fulfill his own purpose. Thus, it can be gathered that an act can only be deemed good as long as the revelation claims it is good.

⁴⁸⁷ Possible is translated from the word *jāi’z* or *yajūz*. It indicates that none of the acts of God are necessary or compulsory for God to act upon. It is possible for God to perform an act as well as to refrain from an act. See the translation of *Iqtisād* by Aladdin M. Yaqub. 157

Here, al-Ghazālī differentiated between the relativity of the quality of an act and that of essence. Relative matters only occur in reference to one's acts which may be deemed good by one and bad by another if the acts are solely based on one's intellect. Meanwhile, the quality of an essence, such as the redness or whiteness of a thing, is not considered a relational quality. For instance, one may say it is red and another may say it is white. Al-Ghazālī claimed that is impossible. Therefore, it can be concluded that one cannot really assure what is good if it is solely based on intellect. Hence, al-Ghazālī established a different categorization of good.

First, an act that fulfills the purpose - be it long term or short term - is considered good. Secondly, an act that fulfills a purpose of the hereafter is considered good. This is what revelation deems good. Thirdly, an act of God is always good, as God is not affected by any purpose. God cannot be inflicted with any blame, punishment or even reward, as God is the agent in His kingdom, which He shares with no one else.

Apart from that, an act that is neither contrary to, nor in accordance with one's purpose is called "frivolity" and a person would be frivolous. This division is perceived by the intellect. Thus, all of this can be considered true as long as it is in accordance with the agent's purpose. However, if it is related to someone other than the previous agent, it might either be good or bad depending on whether the act is in accordance with the latter agent's purpose or not. If it is bad, then it becomes good for one but bad for the other. The terms good and bad are solely in accordance to a person, which are relative matters.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ For instance, al-Ghazālī says that one with no religion may consider adultery with another man's wife good, for he has won her heart. In addition, he would consider one bad, when a person reveals his adulterous act. The devout, on the other hand, would consider that man who exposes the adulterous act a righteous person who has done a good deed. Here, each uses the term good and bad according to his purpose. Likewise, if a king is killed, his enemy would deem the act good and in contrary, supporters would deem it bad. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 223

Thus, in relation to God's actions, al-Ghazālī gave examples that can be easily understood. Al-Ghazālī delineated good and bad as relative if rendered to the human limit of understanding. Similarly, if an act of evil occurs to man, rendering it to God's injustice is impossible as what man assumes is bad for him may not be that bad at all according to God. In other words it can be observed that al-Ghazālī instructed one to train the intellect and not to judge God as one judges humans.

This is because if one judges what is good and bad for God, the judgment will entail obligating God with a purpose. Al-Ghazālī deliberated this through defining the meaning of obligatory.⁴⁸⁹ Al-Ghazālī referred to 'obligatory' as a description of an act. Either performing an act is not preponderant over refraining from it, or performing it is preponderant but is not considered the preferred one, but neither one is considered obligatory. Thus, it is known that an obligatory act is an act from which if one refrains, it would lead to harm.⁴⁹⁰ Al-Ghazālī categorized obligatory only acts that cause harm in the hereafter.

Al-Ghazālī basically defined obligatory in two forms. One refers to the necessary and inevitable consequences to an action that is neglected. For instance, it is compulsory for a man to oblige God's commands, otherwise he will go to hell. Secondly, it is necessary for the known to exist, since its non-existence would negate the knowledge of God and people would be ignorant of God.⁴⁹¹ Al-Ghazālī's demarcation between obligatory and non-obligatory serves as the main thesis in

⁴⁸⁹ It is essential to mention here that the term obligatory refers to *wajib*. *Wājib* also connotes the meaning of necessary and one's duty besides obligatory. However, in this context, *wājib* denotes obligatory or a matter of duty. This is similar to the term *fard* which is applied in Islamic law. See the translation of *Iqtisād* by Aladdin M. Yaqub. 158

⁴⁹⁰ Al-Ghazālī defined harm as taking place either in this worldly life or in the hereafter and it would be either moderate and tolerable, or extreme and intolerable. Acts that will cause harm in the hereafter are defined as obligatory. As for acts that only cause tolerable and moderate harm in the worldly life are not called obligatory. A thirsty person who does not immediately drink water will be harmed a little, but drinking cannot be said to be obligatory for him. Apart from that, acts which do not lead to harm at all and only lead to benefits are not called obligatory, for instance trade and earning money all lead to benefits but are not obligatory. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 222

⁴⁹¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 222

refuting the obligatory acts of God advocated by the Mu'tazilite and the philosophers.⁴⁹² Thus, in understanding the concept of evil through obligatory, it can be perceived that presuming evil as not to originate from God is perhaps obligating God to something. In addition, predicating what is evil to us as evil to God perhaps leads to error in understanding God's actions.

Al-Ghazālī mentioned there were several misconceptions leading to ensuing problems. Firstly, man tends to judge according to personal perception and desire. A person might apply the term 'bad' if it does not meet their own purpose. It is worse when he thinks it is bad in its own virtue, whereas it only opposes his own purpose and not others'. The source of this mistake is in being ignorant towards others and making absolute judgement using one's personal yardstick. It can be observed this misconception affirms that humans can never rely on their intellect per se. Therefore, in perceiving good and bad, man requires revelation as a guide from God.

Secondly, man is inclined to generalize views when it comes to normative perceptions. Al-Ghazālī asserted that something could be contrary to one's purposes in all except for rare cases. For instance, concerning lying, one always finds that lying is bad in its own virtue and not because of other external factors. However, if one looks deeper into the reasons why others lie, there must be some benefit to doing so. Even in Islam one is allowed to lie for the sake of instilling peace between two parties for instance.⁴⁹³ Here, it is observed that normative perception does not apply to God because God is different from humans.

Thirdly, illusions are advanced unto the unknown by presupposing their normative relation to the unknown.⁴⁹⁴ Al-Ghazālī found that frequent mistakes made

⁴⁹² The Mu'tazilite proposed the theory of *al-Salāh wa al-Aṣlah* (good and salutary), whereby God should not bestow only good fates to good doers. This is similar to the philosophers' take on providence. To them, God is just and therefore should offer providence and rewards to good doers.

⁴⁹³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-I'tiqād*, 221-225

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*

by man assert his estimative faculty as the converse. If one thing appears to be associated with another, then the latter is always inevitably associated with the former as well. If a thing is always associated to another, it might not necessarily be associated to it at another time. For instance, names like Indian and Negro are associated with ugliness. This association might influence one's feelings; even if the terms were applied to the most beautiful people, one may feel aversion towards them by nature. Most people conceive something through estimation rather than clear intellect.⁴⁹⁵

It is clear that al-Ghazālī strongly emphasized the definitions of good and bad by repeatedly mentioning them in arguments to counter the theory of the Mu'tazilite on good and salutary (*al-Salāḥ wa al-Aṣḥāḥ*).⁴⁹⁶ Al-Ghazālī believed that misinterpretations consequently lead to confusion and misperceived concepts when definitions are made based on desires. In short, al-Ghazālī vigorously explained that it is possible for God to act upon whatever He wishes and wills. His power precedes humans' actions and will. His power is not limited to only good and positive provisions to humankind but also coups the negativity that humans are faced with as well.

Al-Ghazālī also asserted the importance of knowing and obeying God according to God's ordinance and law (*shar'*). This is because if reason determines the necessity to oblige and obey God, it might be used for unbeneficial purposes, which is impossible, because reason does not render to the unprofitable. Similarly, reason stands for the benefit and convenience of servants according to their desires. Even if people use their desire correctly, they might not have had that desire previously; rather,

⁴⁹⁵ Al-Ghazālī strongly held that the most common error in judgment stems from applying estimation (*awḥām*) and imagination (*takhayyulat*) before intellect. Deeming something either good (*istiḥsan*) or bad (*istiḡbah*) through estimation and imagination will lead to incorrect understanding of God's actions. This is what al-Ghazālī attempted to advocate, and which will serve as a fundamental premise for the upcoming discussion. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, 248

⁴⁹⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, 249. See also Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 173

one would be deterred from it due to the reasons that incline one towards rewards or punishments of the hereafter. When referring to God, this would be impossible as God possesses divine will, which does not benefit or harm Him in any way.

In sum, it can be observed that in addressing the issue of evil in relation with God, one cannot deny that the act of evil or bad events is also part of God's creation. However, one has to understand that evil or bad in relation to acts are considered relative. An event might look bad in our opinions but to God it might be the opposite. Nevertheless, this does not apply to understanding the quality of an essence. The quality of an essence must be referred to the revelation according to al-Ghazālī. Apart from that, al-Ghazālī also highlighted the definition of obligatory, which God must be dismissed from. Nothing should be obligated to God as well as preventing Him from creating bad events for His servants. Therefore, clearly, al-Ghazālī truly embraced God's total power and will in determining occurrences, be they good or bad in the eyes of humans.

5.1.2 Rewards and Punishments

In the discourse of God's actions on rewards and punishment, the main thesis advocated by al-Ghazālī was to refute God being obliged to reward the saint and punish the sinner. Hence, al-Ghazālī's argument basically focused on maintaining God's power and will in offering rewards and punishments to man. While man, on the other hand, should not impose any expectations of God that indirectly obligate God's action. According to al-Ghazālī, nothing can be obligatory of God because every action is possible for Him. There are mainly six subjects discussed that assert God's power to act in contrast with man's expectations and presumptions.

Firstly, al-Ghazālī affirmed it is possible for God to create or not to create man, as well as to assign obligations to man or not. This is in contrary to the claim of the Mu'tazilite who asserted that it is compulsory for God to create and bestow man with obligations after creation.⁴⁹⁷ In response to this, al-Ghazālī reiterated the definition of compulsory. If the act is abandoned, it will bring harm to the agent and obviously God cannot be harmed or affected by anything.

According to the Mu'tazilite, man's obligation (*taklif*) is a benefit for them, hence it is compulsory for God to endow man with *taklif*. When man possesses obligations, he will receive rewards. In return, al-Ghazālī said that *taklif* does not entail benefits but rather, it causes responsibility for humans. If man does not perform his obligations, he will be punished. Rewards come with obedience not with obligations.⁴⁹⁸

Secondly, al-Ghazālī affirmed that it is up to God to assign obligations⁴⁹⁹ to His servants, whether within their ability or beyond. The Mu'tazilite advocated that it is against God's justice to impose what is beyond man's capability. They refuted claims that God assigns obligations beyond man's ability and God is obliged to assign only what is within man's capability. In contrary, the Ash'arite claimed it is possible to assign obligation beyond man's capability and God does so according to His preference.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ See al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar. *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-'Adl*. (Egypt: Dar al-Kitab, n.d)

⁴⁹⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'itiqād*, 235

⁴⁹⁹ According to the Sunni and as al-Ghazālī stated, obligation is a speech in itself that consists of the addresser, addressee and the object being addressed. The addressee must be able to comprehend the message. Thus, speaking to an inanimate object or insane person does not count as obligation. Hence, obligating is a form of speaking to someone who is lower in rank than the addresser. If the addresser and addressee are of the same rank, it is 'soliciting.' If the addressee is higher than the addresser, it is known as 'supplicating.' Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'itiqād*, 237

⁵⁰⁰ In general, the Ash'arite and Maturidi agree that it is not compulsory for God to assign obligations to man. However, they somewhat differ in the discussion of assigning obligations beyond one's capability. The Maturidi saw that the possibility for God to assign beyond capability is not within rational or revelation possibility. However, it is within what the Ash'arite claim, that if it is not possible it is like forbidding its essence (from being conceivable). Assigning obligation is what comprises God's knowledge in contrast to assigned obligation. For instance, assigning obligation for Abu Jahal means

Al-Ghazālī did not accept the impossibility of assigning obligation beyond capability, as it would lead to two problems: one, the inconceivability of its essence and two, bestowing something bad unto the agent. If a boss commands a disabled person to stand up, this refers to a requirement of the soul. Even if the disabled person cannot perform the obligation and it is within God’s knowledge, it does not affect God in any way. If it does not affect God in any way, it cannot be viewed as frivolous (*‘abath*) because God cannot be associated with purpose. This is also similar in deeming good or bad unto God, which is impossible for humans.

An example is of Abu Jahl. God already knew that Abu Jahl would not obey His messenger, and yet, He still commanded Muhammad to convince Abu Jahl to believe God’s words.⁵⁰¹ Although fulfilling the command is unimaginable, the command itself is imaginable.⁵⁰²

Al-Ghazālī affirmed that God can assign obligation even when it is impossible for man to act upon it. For there is no power prior to the act, until God endows one with power, which is then followed by one’s own choice and effort. All this happens within God’s knowledge. Al-Ghazālī finally assured that nothing is impossible for God, whether assigning something that is impossible in virtue or extraneous in acquiring. Al-Ghazālī had earlier defined obligation as speech that is a requirement residing in one’s mind and is addressed to someone who is lower in rank than the addresser. The obligation is not required to either be fulfilled or deemed good or bad (God is not obligated to reward or punish).

being a believer. Thus, it is not impossible for it to be an obligation as he himself is capable of being a believer. Assigning obligation must not be seen from God’s knowledge, because it entails deeming what is bad for God (*istiqbah*). Abd al-Ghani al-Ghanimi. *Syarh al-‘Aqīdah al-Tahawīyah al-Musamma Bayan al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah*. (Syria: Dar al-Fikr, 1992), 128

⁵⁰¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, 172

⁵⁰² This statement says that regardless of what is known by God, in principle, the unbeliever has the power to obey the command, even if he does not actually obey it. In this sense, God’s knowledge that Abu Jahl will never become a believer does not negate Abu Jahl’s power to become a believer. It is only that Abu Jahl will never exercise this power to become a believer, and hence nothing contrary to God’s knowledge will ever take place. This is supposed to establish the opponents’ view that God’s command to Abu Jahl to become a believer is not beyond Abu Jahl’s power. *Ibid*.

Thirdly, al-Ghazālī claimed that if God may bring suffering to an animal that is innocent of any crime, He is not required to reward it. If one claims that God is required to reward and compensate for the loss of innocent lives, this would be seen as God being obligated to act. However, as al-Ghazālī defined in previous sections, obligation leads to harm when one abandons the act. It is nevertheless impossible to harm or affect God with anything, especially His servants.

If one claims that God is unwise by not resurrecting and compensating innocent creatures, al-Ghazālī responded by reiterating the true meaning of wisdom. He claimed that wisdom refers to the state of knowledge of the order of things and the power to produce this order. Thus, in refraining from the act of compulsion, God must not be questioned as He is the maker of the order. Another reason proposed by the Mu'tazilite who claimed that God is obligated to compensate is that if God does not compensate, it would be unjust of Him.

For al-Ghazālī, injustice is not applicable to God, for injustice is only imaginable on the part of someone whose act might affect another; yet this is not qualified with respect to God. This is true even on the part of someone who is under the command of another and acts contrary to that command. A man is not considered unjust in whatever he does to his own property as long as he does not contradict the revelation. Similarly, God cannot be considered tyrannous for taking something away from His own creations.⁵⁰³ God's power encompasses hurting sinless animals and He does not have to reward them. This refers to the rational possibilities of God's obligation to reward the good doers and punish the evil. Al-Ghazālī again repudiated the association of unfairness with God, similar to his argument on the futility of God.⁵⁰⁴ Both predicates cannot be referred to God, as it is meaningless for the owner

⁵⁰³ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 172

⁵⁰⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 241

of the universe Himself to act unfairly towards His own possessions by forsaking their rights. Thus, injustice is totally inapplicable to God, as the servants are God's property and He is free to act according to His will. Injustice is therefore absent in this sense.⁵⁰⁵ It can be observed that al-Ghazālī refuted claims of God's obligation, wisdom and justice by reiterating the correct definitions of the terms.

Fourth, al-Ghazālī claimed it is not obligatory for God to care for the well-being of His servants, but He may do and decree whatever He wills. To al-Ghazālī, nothing should be obligatory for God. Suppose there are three children. One died as a Muslim in his childhood, another reached maturity, became a Muslim and died as a mature Muslim. The third child became an infidel in his maturity and died in the state of infidelity. Al-Ghazālī used this example to show that God should not be obliged to care for His servants' well-being. As for the Mu'tazilite, they may have claimed that in order for God to express His justice, the mature infidel must be damned in hell while the mature Muslim would gain a higher position than the Muslim child.⁵⁰⁶

Fifth, when God obliges His servants and they obey, it is not obligatory for Him to reward them. If He wants He may reward or punish them or even worse, annihilate and never resurrect them. He may even forgive infidels and punish believers. Everything is possible for Him and nothing contradicts His divine attributes.⁵⁰⁷

In his emphasis on rebutting the idea of God being responsible for reward and punishment, al-Ghazālī repudiated the concept of *taklif* that demands purpose and *taklif* that requires God to reward good deeds. This is because it implies the power of God and making things compulsory for God. In this situation, God must accommodate humans' purpose. God must reward good deeds and one's gratefulness to Him. One

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 241-243

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 244-245

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 246

whose right is fulfilled has no obligation to compensate,⁵⁰⁸ while in contrary, God needs to be sanctified from any purpose. Al-Ghazālī stressed that it is not compulsory for humans to receive rewards, because their actions and obedience are out of man's responsibility, which is *taklif*.⁵⁰⁹ Hence, in addressing this matter, al-Ghazālī reiterated the weakness of the mind to deem God as good and bad. Besides, humans generally tend to advance their estimation and imagination in making judgments.

Also according to al-Ghazālī, God's repulsiveness (*istiqbah*) cannot be measured and nor can His excellence (*istihsan*).⁵¹⁰ This is for protecting His divinity from being associated with any purpose, as it would defeat His sanctity. On the topic of God's *istihsan* (repulsiveness) and *istiqbah* (excellence), al-Ghazālī affirmed God's right to perceive His own scale of *īmān* and *kufr*, or obedience and ignorance, which are neutral to Him. Demanding that God apply the same values as humans was unacceptable to al-Ghazālī.⁵¹¹

Another point made by al-Ghazālī is that a reward is compensation for a service, and hence, a slave is not entitled to any rewards as he/she is automatically obligated to serve the master. If one serves for compensation, then it is not a service.⁵¹²

Finally, al-Ghazālī advocated that without a law, man is not required to know God and thank Him for blessings. This is contrary to the Mu'tazilite, who claimed that through the intellect man can identify what is obligatory.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁸ If that is the case, every reward requires new gratefulness, and this gratefulness requires another reward, and this would lead to an infinite regress. Thus, God and servants both are bound by each other's right forever, and this is absurd. *Ibid*

⁵⁰⁹ The Maturidi denied the possibility of God torturing obedient people and rewarding the ignorant due to His repulsive act. However, they differ from the Mu'tazilite who believed that a repulsive act is to contain from transgressing His perfect attributes. They are certainly similar to the Ash'arite in denying any compulsion on God. According to the Ash'arite, God is not worthy of such repulsive acts; however, they do not deny His power that reigns supreme. Al-Ghanimi, Abd al-Ghaniy. *Sharh al-'Aqai'd al-Tahawiyah al-Musamma bi Bayan al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. (Syria: Dar al-Fikr, 1992), 129

⁵¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'I'tiqād*, 229

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, 247

⁵¹² *Ibid*

⁵¹³ *Ibid*, 249

The Mu'tazilite firmly maintained that the ability of the intellect is to be capable of recognizing the benefits of something in order to determine man's obligations. In determining benefits, they must either benefit God or humans. Obviously, it is absurd to associate benefits with God, as God is the Supreme One who only affects others and is not affected by any occurrence. If the benefits are for humans, these will either be claimed in this world or later in the hereafter. If referring to this world, there is only hardship without remuneration. On the other hand, in order to demand benefits in the hereafter, how can one be assured whether his deeds are going to be rewarded?⁵¹⁴

It is important to note that although the intellect serves to comprehend the message, it cannot be the sole denominator in attributing necessities. However, it helps only to observe and determine signs that one has to be aware of to avoid forthcoming torments.

Al-Ghazālī at the same time refuted the arguments of the Mu'tazilite who denied the necessity for sending messengers to humankind. He emphasized that God is the One who necessitates, messengers deliver the message, and the intellect processes information and motivates to do good deeds through natural disposition. It is clear that the intellect serves to analyze the prophets' miracles and perceive God's commands without possessing the power to determine the necessary.⁵¹⁵

Al-Ghazālī further affirmed the importance of law in determining necessities by giving a metaphor with a lion. The prophecy of a harmful lion is considered a law that serves as a basic warning to humankind. Consequently, humans are required to use reason in order to understand the law prescribed by God. This is where nature comes in the picture, as it causes the urge to take precautions against injury and harm in the

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, 250-251

⁵¹⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 174

hereafter. A thing will only become necessary if neglecting it causes harm as reported by the law and harm becomes known only through reason. However, reason alone cannot deliver humans the true knowledge, which makes law an important aspect of necessity.⁵¹⁶

In line with that, al-Ghazālī eventually refuted the opinion that it is unjust of God to inflict bad fates to people. So did the Mu'tazilite who claimed that the sufferings and weaknesses of man should not be associated with God because they demonstrate His injustice. God can only provide man with good occurrences, whereas bad incidents should occur due to man's own mistakes. This theory consequently posits the necessary actions by God, which was strongly disproved by al-Ghazālī.

In his *Iqtiṣād*, al-Ghazālī further sustained the importance of placing the divine law above intellectual activity. This is to refute those who firmly believe that the ability of the intellect is capable to recognize the benefits of a thing in order to determine man's obligations. If a benefit is being determined, it must either benefit God or humans. Obviously, it is absurd to associate benefits with God, as God is the Supreme One who only affects others and is not affected by any occurrence. If the benefits are for humans, they will either be claimed now, in this world, or later in the hereafter. If referring to this world, there is hardship without remuneration. On the other hand, in order to demand benefits in the hereafter, how can one be assured whether his deeds are going to be rewarded?⁵¹⁷

Thus, al-Ghazālī affirmed that the human intellect is not capable of identifying rewards and punishments. One cannot determine whom God should reward or punish, as the human intellect is limited. This is similar with the case of the law of obligatory

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid*

⁵¹⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, 250-251

and prohibited, which cannot be determined by the intellect. Its issuance can only be known from God's enlightenment of humans through the messenger.⁵¹⁸

In sum, in discussing God's act specifically on punishments and rewards, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī proposed a reversed set of thoughts from the normal intellectual perception in perceiving God's acts. God's acts should be perceived differently from human acts as His acts are intertwined with His knowledge, will and power, the wisdom behind which the mind cannot perceive. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that al-Ghazālī also did not deny God's promise to fulfill His promises of rewards in the Qur'an. However, as part of exercising the best conduct of thought, one should never necessitate God's acts, especially in reward and punishment.

5.1.3 God's Will, Power and Knowledge

It can be observed al-Ghazālī stressed upon a middle path between those of the Qadariyah⁵¹⁹ and Jabariyah⁵²⁰, whereby the earlier referred to total freewill and the latter suggested a deterministic approach to God's actions. This can be seen in al-Ghazālī's emphasis of a twofold concept of actions: the actions of God and the actions of humans. God's actions are proven through His power and will, while man is also free to act within their power, which is known as *kasb* (acquisition).⁵²¹ Thus, man's actions consist of two powers: power of God known as the creating power and power of man known as the power of acquisition. God's power is similar in its term but

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid*

⁵¹⁹ The Mu'tazilite sect who suggests free will and denies God's role in any events. Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq*. 32

⁵²⁰ The opposite of Qadariyyah, led by Ma'bad al-Juhani and Ja'd Dirham who believed in the total power of God. A deterministic approach to God's action, denying any form of free will of human beings. Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq*. 25

⁵²¹ This term can be traced back to *Maqālāt* of the Asy'ari as follows, "God has power over that which He has endowed (*aqdar*) men with power and that one movement, as an object of power, is the object of power of two possessors of power, namely God and man, so that if God the eternal does it, it is by necessity and if man created does it, it is by acquisition (*iktisāban*)." Asy'ari, *Maqālāt*, 549. See also Wolfson, *Philosophy of Kalam*, 665

different in concept. Nevertheless, God's power does not necessarily preponder (*tarjīh*) or determine man's actions. Thus, it cannot be claimed that with the existence of God's power, man's power becomes futile. God's power is necessitated in every man's action to prove His omnipotence that acts as the creator of every action.⁵²²

According to al-Ghazālī, God is known as the creator of His servants' actions, but He does not prevent humans from performing voluntary deeds. If humans had no power (*qudrah*) to make choices, it would be considered complete compulsion and man would be left with no effort and choice. On the other hand, if man had power solely on his own, without God's power intruding on his actions, and considering man were the creator of his own actions, it would deny God's power and His active relation with humankind. Al-Ghazālī rationalized by questioning how one could be forced to do something when one can instinctively comprehend the difference between voluntary and involuntary actions. How, then, is it possible for an event to occur to a servant, when God as his creator does not possess knowledge of the movement?

Therefore, there remains no other way than to accept the middle way (*al-Iqtisād*) by asserting that a servant has power over his actions, which was created by the power of God and in connection with one's ability to make an effort, which is known as *iktisab* (effort). The theory of acquisition (*iktisab*) represents humans' power, while God's pre-eternal power is that with which He creates humans' power too. Nevertheless, humans are left with choice and responsibility (*taklif*). If they were left powerless, it would defeat the purpose of *taklif*. Whereas in countering the Mu'tazilites' theory of *al-salah wa al-aslah*, al-Ghazālī stressed the essentiality of abiding to law (*syar'*) instead of reason in knowing the obligatory acts of humans; this contradicts the Mu'tazilite who held that reason itself is capable of leading humans to distinguish right from wrong. Al-Ghazālī again highlighted that the power of God may

⁵²² This discussion has been iterated in chapter three in God's attribute of power.

not necessarily be connected with one creation per se; nevertheless, His vast power has existed pre-eternally, and before the universe existed and at the time of creation the connection was different in nature.⁵²³

Apart from God's power, humans' actions and acquisitions cannot escape His will either. The divine act does not proceed from the necessary consequence of divine essence. It is the arbitrary decree of the divine will, an attribute co-eternal but not identical to divine essence. Each event takes place through His will and power, be it good or bad, beneficial or destructive, successful or a failure, even Islamic or *kufir*. It is evident here that the actions of man are in accordance with God's will.

However, one might assume God is more than powerful to stop bad things from occurring and then question how evil things could happen in this world. It is as though the power of the devil reigns over God's will when something evil occurs. Furthermore, if God stops one from doing what they wish, it would negate man's free will.⁵²⁴ Again, this is where man's acquisition and intellect should be employed. With the ability and capability of power and will, man is required to choose and act upon what the revelation commands.

Besides, God must also be perceived as acting according to His own will. He does whatever He wishes and is not subject to providing something better to His servants, as the Mu'tazilite claimed. Al-Ghazālī countered their opinion on God's obligation to appoint good and better fates for His servants out of His wisdom and justice. Al-Ghazālī refuted this by arguing the death of the obedient child or adult in comparison to the death of the undutiful child or adult. Besides, as discussed previously, it is impossible to accuse God of being tyrannous to His own creation; similarly, it is absurd to think that God could not act freely towards His creations and

⁵²³ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 170

⁵²⁴ *Ibid*, 170-171

He would have to consequently react in a manner customary to Him, which is through providing good fates for His creations.⁵²⁵

On a more important note, al-Ghazālī highlighted that God is the Agent of Will (*Fa'il Mukhtar*), Who wills with knowledge of His action. This directly emerges as a refutation of the necessary causation of the philosophers, according to whom, the universe emerged from God through compulsory cause and effect. Al-Ghazālī distinguished between the occurring of the agent (*fa'il*) with or without will. An agent with will causes something to happen with knowledge and power. On the other hand, an agent without will only causes other occurrences through accident and without knowledge.

Thus, there is a difference between God and other substances as the occurring agents. God produces something with knowledge and will. Meanwhile, fire is also considered an agent for burning something. However, fire burns without knowledge or will and is hence called an agent metaphorically.⁵²⁶ The true agent, God, is the one who causes occurrences with knowledge and will. Here is obvious the importance of will in rejecting the philosophers' argument of causation as well as affirming God as the real agent behind every occurrence.

Besides power and will, each of God's actions occurs in accordance to His knowledge as well. Questions arise, such as can the contrary of what is known by God be the object of power? Do events that happen in the world contradict what is known by God? Do changes lead to inconsistency in God's knowledge? Thus, this section will address these questions with the following three statements proposed by al-Ghazālī.

⁵²⁵ To the Mu'tazilite, *taklif* is a burden that carries no benefit to humans. They argue for humans' rights to gain rewards without having to carry any responsibilities, which is better known as their theory of *al-salah wa al-aslah*. Al-Ghazālī. The Mu'tazilite went further absurdly by asking for rewards to be given in the beginning as it is the slaves' right. Al-Ghazālī replied in a short manner, that rewards only belong to the obedient. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'I'iqād*, 244-245. See also Al-Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 172-173. See also Al-Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 170

⁵²⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 86

First, God's knowledge encompasses universals and particulars. Second, God knows existents and non-existents. Third, God's power and will are in accordance with His knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī first heavily emphasized in each of his writings in *Iḥyāʾ*, *Iqtisād* and *Tahāfut* that God's knowledge encompasses all universals and particulars. This is to rebut the philosophers' opinion that God knows nothing but Himself.⁵²⁷ According to al-Ghazālī, God knows every particular event that takes place in the world. If God only knows universal knowledge and is ignorant of the individual human being, how can He know who deserves rewards or punishments? Thus, God the All-Knower knows universals as well as particulars.

Second, existents consist of eternal and contingents. The eternal are God's essence and attributes. Whoever knows something other than himself is even more knowledgeable of his own essence and attributes. Therefore, if it is proven that God knows that which is other than Himself, it is necessary for Him to also know His essence and attributes. He also knows that which is other than Himself, since that which is called 'the other' is His well-designed handiwork and His exquisite and well-ordered act.⁵²⁸ And this proves the knowledge of the Maker as well as His power in relation to His actions.

Finally, it has been proven that God's knowledge is very much related to His actions and every occurrence. Another question arising is whether it is possible for God's knowledge to be contradictory to the object of His power. According to al-

⁵²⁷ And He knows others with a universal knowledge which does not fall under time and does not change through past, present and future. They opine that nothing is hidden from God, only that He knows the particulars in a universal manner. Al-Ghazālī. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 142

⁵²⁸ Al-Ghazālī. *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'Itiqād*, 163

Ghazālī, it is impossible for the object of His power to occur contradictory to His knowledge.⁵²⁹ If this happens, it denies His attribute as the all-Knower.

Thus, obviously al-Ghazālī emphasized God's knowledge is concurrent with His actions. God's knowledge is one and eternal, comprising eternals and contingencies, past, present and future, and is consistent with His power, will and actions.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, in the discussion on God's actions, al-Ghazālī clearly emphasized God's power and supremacy as the Creator of every occurrence. In addressing evil, al-Ghazālī stressed the relativity of the quality of an act, which man should fully understand before judging God. Al-Ghazālī proposed that man should not obligate an act unto God, such as claiming that God should not inflict misfortune to someone. Man's intellect is very limited in captivating what is good and bad in accordance with God's act. Thus, on the concept of evil, al-Ghazālī appeared to address this by correcting the perception of human mental activity.

He adopted the same approach in addressing the concept of rewards and punishments. Once again, al-Ghazālī discussed the act of liberating God from any obligations. Thus, man should not command or expect God in any way to reward or punish according to one's deeds. The power and act of reward and punishment solely rely upon God's will and wisdom and it is not within man's capability to determine

⁵²⁹ Al-Ghazālī forwarded an example. If it is part of God's knowledge that Zayd shall die on Saturday morning, then it is asked whether the creation of life for Zayd on that morning is possible or not. The truth is, both answers are correct. It is possible for Zayd to live by virtue of its own. However, it is impossible in adjacent to something other than itself. It is when the attachment of God's knowledge to Zayd's death occurs that his death becomes necessitated. Otherwise God's knowledge will turn into ignorance and it is impossible. Al-Ghazālī. *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 151

God's act. This includes questioning God's responsibility in taking care of man's well-being, assigning man with responsibility beyond his capability and others.

Lastly, al-Ghazālī argued that in understanding God's actions, one must affirm that God is the Agent of Will (*Fa'il Mukhtar*) who acts with will, power and knowledge. This is to distinguish between God's power and will from that of humans. God's will and power are in creating occurrences while man's power and will are limited only to acquiring something. Besides, God's knowledge must also be understood differently from humans. His knowledge encapsulates every occurrence, unlike man. Nevertheless, God's foreknowledge, power and will do not disregard man's responsibility to act accordingly.

In sum, al-Ghazālī's arguments on God's actions certainly prove the realization that man's intellectual limitation cannot fully perceive God's acts. Obligating God should be totally avoided. Man, however, is responsible for acting according to the capability endowed by God.

5.2 Actions of God According to Maimonides

It is well-understood that God is omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent, presuming that He opts for the best for His creatures. Yet there are still the righteous who suffer. Thus, the problem of evil seems directly related to God's foreknowledge, which entails free will, divine providence and retribution. In discussing God's actions, Maimonides focused on explicating the concept of evil, God's providence, intellectual perfection, God's will, omniscience and omnipotence, and human freedom. Maimonides' approach attempts to reconcile philosophy with religion, which is apparent in the

discussion on intellectual perfection through al-Fārābī's emanation theory.⁵³⁰ His discussion seems to strike a middle path between Aristotelian naturalism and Mosaic emphasis on divine will.

5.2.1 The Concept of Evil

In deliberating the origin of evil, Maimonides first affirmed God's divinity and denied evil as succumbing to God's actions.⁵³¹ According to Maimonides, it is impossible for God to create evil directly or to claim that He has direct intention to produce evil, because all His work is perfect and good. He only produces existence and all existence is good. Meanwhile, evil is of a negative character and considered non-existent. Evil can only be related to God, as He produces corporeal elements that can be the source of all destruction and evil.⁵³² Only man can directly cause evil to occur, which will be discussed in a deeper sense in the following paragraph.

The notion of the root of evil is frequently linked to God's action; in a literal sense, this is inconsistent with God who possesses sanctity and divinity. In addressing the question of whether God creates evil things, Maimonides explicated the origins of evil through the Aristotelean theory, which describes that if one removes something, he will be the cause of the moved thing. For instance, if one removes a pillar that supports a beam against movement, that person caused the motion. In this sense, it can be said that one who removes a certain property produces the absence of that property; although, the absence of a property is not a positive thing. This definitely resembles

⁵³⁰ Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 148

⁵³¹ Maimonides addressed in the beginning of the discussion what the Mutakkallimin professed. He refuted their argument as they attributed both positive and negative actions to God. He said the theologians only applied the term non-existence to absolute non-existence and it does not require an agent. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 265

⁵³² *Ibid*, 266

the Aristotelian *Physics* works.⁵³³ In other words, it can be understood that the absence of something also produces absence itself. For instance, one who puts the light out is similar to one who produces darkness.

Although darkness is a negative property and requires no agents as claimed by theologians,⁵³⁴ it can still be related to an agent. However, this only refers to an indirect relation, as negation does not exist and in-existent things do not require an agent. For instance, in Isaiah 45:7 it is mentioned “I form the light and create (*bore*) darkness: I make peace and create (*bore*) evil.” According to Maimonides, this verse demonstrates the act of creation out of nothing with the term *bara* used in the verse.⁵³⁵ Thus, all negative and evil matters represent non-existence and God is the cause of those matters indirectly and by accident. Therefore, God cannot be directly linked to evil, as evil is a privation of a quality.

God only creates existence and all existence is good, whilst evil has a negative character and cannot be created by God. The existence of evil emerges through God’s creation of corporeal beings. Hence, evil is in reality created through the creation of humans, which is always connected to evil and the root of all negativity. Nonetheless, Maimonides asserted that the creation of the corporeal element is also considered good, because it is the source of all evil and is likewise good for the permanence of the universe and the continuation of the order of things.

According to Maimonides, men who possess evil within are shielded by ignorance. In contrary, knowledge unveils the heart from ignorance and removes hatred and conflict, consequently leading to knowledge of God. There are three causes

⁵³³ *Ibid*, 265

⁵³⁴ The theologians did not apply the term non-existence to the absence of properties. They considered the absence of properties as the opposite of existence per se. Primarily, Maimonides agreed with their view. However, he did not agree when subsequently, the theologians categorized the negative conditions as positive properties in predicating them of God. Thus, God would be the creator of blindness and deafness. Refer to Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 265

⁵³⁵ This is similar to the verse describing creation that took place from nothing to something, for instance “In the beginning God created (*bara*)...” Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 265-266

of evil as categorized by Maimonides. First is the natural consequence that happens to someone. The first moral qualities of the soul are dependent upon the condition of the body, which is subject to genesis and destruction. Rudavsky termed this as metaphysical evil. Man is endowed with matter that causes suffering of infirmities and evil.⁵³⁶

Second, people cause evil to others. This is also called natural evil that may be caused by political upheaval or immoral behavior⁵³⁷ when, for instance, some use strength against others. This evil is worse than the previous type, but according to Maimonides it is not widespread and is quite rare.

What concerned Maimonides the most is the third kind of evil, moral evil,⁵³⁸ which is caused by one's own actions. As a result of this negative force, the soul is compromised in two forms. First, the evil residing in the soul will directly cause changes to the body. Second, the soul's desire is beyond the control of the intellect, as it is habituated in accustoming with the desire. Desire automatically produces ignorance in people who question God's power when they are not granted what they wish for. They become more deviant as they follow their innate desires.⁵³⁹ Maimonides reminded us that eating and drinking excessively leads to diseases of the soul. Looking at the condition during his time, Maimonides said that all human necessities such as air, water and food tended to be cheaper and more accessible than luxurious and superfluous items. Hence, God provides humans with what they need and in the right proportions, yet men eventually destroy themselves.

Contrarily, those who appreciate His grace can see His mercy through comprehending the existence of nature as given by God without having to return any favors. Besides, God's mercy is also evident in His justice, by demonstrating equality

⁵³⁶ T.M Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 141

⁵³⁷ *Ibid*, 141

⁵³⁸ *Ibid*, 141

⁵³⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 267

in His creation. For instance, what is granted physically to an individual is given to other individuals as well. Therefore, His mercy is revealed in these two verses, “All His ways are judgment” (Deutonomy 32:4) and “All paths of the Lord are mercy and truth and so on” (Psalms 25:10), as explained above. This demonstrates that each action of God is just.⁵⁴⁰

In sum, Maimonides can be seen as solving the problems of human evil through severing the direct cause from God in contrast to the theologians. Maimonides affirmed that evil is a form of privation of properties. Things that do not exist cannot be directly linked to God. Thus, since evil is considered a privation of a material, only existing things can be the direct cause of evil and that is man. God can only be regarded as an agent in the sense that God brought matter into existence with its property of being associated to privation. This is proven through the word ‘make’ (*oseh*) instead of ‘create’ (*boreh*) used to describe evil. Maimonides claimed that it is the good that ensures the perpetuity of generation and continuation of the order of things.

5.2.2 Rewards and Punishments

God’s actions mainly exhibit His relation with creations. Rewards and punishments are certainly parts of His actions as they demonstrate God’s omnipotence. Moreover, human nature undoubtedly demands rewards from God as a motivation to perform good deeds and abandon bad deeds. Thus, in addressing God’s rewards and punishment, Maimonides addressed this issue through the elaboration of God’s providence. Apart from his theory of providence, Maimonides also argued the concept

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 271. This can be seen as parallel to the Mu’tazilites’ view of God’s justice, where it is impossible for God to inflict evil on good people.

of reward and punishment through Job's account. The theory of providence is very much associated with Aristotelean philosophy. Meanwhile, the argument through the account of Job certainly delineates Maimonides' employment of religious text. Thus, it can be seen that Maimonides' argument on rewards and punishments is demonstrated twofold.⁵⁴¹

In the discussion on God's providence, Maimonides basically deliberated four opinions. First, no providence is to avail either to human beings or the universe. In fact, the whole universe is subject to mere accidents of atoms and combination by chance. This is the theory of Epicurus and some Israelite atheists.⁵⁴²

Secondly, some part of the universe is under God's providence and some of it is left to chance and accident. The constant movement that follows the principal order is thus under God's providence. This is for instance the movement of the spheres, which is necessary for the continuance of other creatures. Besides, individuals of species are likewise guarded under this providence before they develop independently. Therefore, other occasions that occur to an individual are considered mere accidents, which do not accustom to any rules. This explains Aristotle's theory of the eternity of the universe.⁵⁴³

Third, Maimonides explained the Ash'arite's view, who are known for their dominant opinion of predestination and God's will on occurrences. Maimonides clarified that human actions are thus useless as God had predestined, and whatever is possible to humans is in reality necessary or impossible to God. In defending their

⁵⁴¹ Samuel ibn Tibbon suggested that Maimonides seemed to advocate two contradictory theories of Divine Providence – one is a demonstrative theory based on divine overflow through intellectual perfection. Second, Ibn Tibbon claimed that the Guide contained a supernatural theory based on divine miraculous intervention. T.M Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 149

⁵⁴² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 282-288

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*

theory, Maimonides added that they must have presumed that God's actions have no final end. It is clear that everything that happens is due to His will and governance.⁵⁴⁴

Fourth, the view of the Mu'tazilite is that man is given free will to act upon his destiny. For the Mu'tazilite, to God only wisdom and justice can be ascribed. Maimonides mentioned their absurdities and contradictions, which put God in a position of justice only to humans but not to other creatures such as animals that need to be slaughtered.⁵⁴⁵

While Maimonides found all four above-mentioned theories absurd and contradictory, he developed his own theory consistent with what he claimed is compatible with the Law. According to Maimonides, human beings are granted free will. Irrational animals too move of their own free will. This is also the will of God, whereby God wills for humans to move freely. In rationalizing God's justice, Maimonides explicated that both good and bad events must be based on man's own merits. God's justice supersedes human affairs. As for the natural world and irrational animals, Maimonides remarked there was no prior mention by Jewish scholars. There were only the Geonim who emulated the Mu'tazilite.⁵⁴⁶

In this case, Maimonides undoubtedly appears to imitate Aristotle's theory of accident and chance, which is circumscribed to nature. Maimonides affirmed there is no interference of God's providence in fallen leaves. His divine providence is therefore closely associated with His divine intellect, whether in rewarding or punishing humans, which is in line with their deeds. This clearly demonstrates the extension of divine providence to human beings, such as that which occurred to previous

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 288

Prophets.⁵⁴⁷ Maimonides stated that God's providence extends to other species but excludes individuals of the species. A question then rises as to the reason for selecting humans as receivers of the special providence. Maimonides responded rhetorically by asking why man alone of all species is endowed with intellect. Thus, according to Maimonides, this is all due to God's will and wisdom.⁵⁴⁸

Besides, as mentioned above, providence is closely related to the intellect, and the recipients of providence will act upon this intellect. Also, Maimonides affirmed that God cannot be attributed deficiencies and weaknesses. This could only be achieved by separating providence of humans from others.⁵⁴⁹ Maimonides' theory of providence clearly attempts to incorporate Aristotle's theory of providence with that of the Law.

In Maimonides' opinion, it is impossible for God to inflict punishments or bad things to good people, as God is just: "All His ways are justice" (Deutonomy 32:4). Maimonides agreed with Aristotle's divine providence unto superlunary orderings, things which are constantly moving.⁵⁵⁰ However, he did not agree with Aristotle's claim that the sublunar universe comprising humans' and animals' actions occurs due to chance. Maimonides argued that God's providence reckons human beings but not irrational beings.⁵⁵¹

Given the instance of a shipwreck, Maimonides agreed that a shipwreck occurs due to both causal or natural order and also God's providence in determining those who are safe and otherwise. God must therefore have knowledge of particulars as well

⁵⁴⁷ Divine providence, as expressed in the Scriptures, "He giveth to the beast his food" (Psalms 145: 16). This verse shows differently, as providence is also extended to irrational beings. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 287

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 288

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 287

⁵⁵⁰ Aristotle did not incorporate God's providence to the sublunar world because of its contingencies. The superlunary sphere certainly possesses its own 'orderly course' and is eternal according to his theory of eternity. Thus, only the superlunary can be associated with God to preserve His eternity and avoid incorporating God with contingencies.

⁵⁵¹ Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 145

as the causal nexus in which natural events are ordered. Thus, Maimonides differentiates general providence, which extends equally towards all members of the human species as part of the natural order that is only aimed towards entire animal species and not individual animals. Maimonides did not believe that it is through divine interference that a certain leaf drops or a certain spider catches a fly.

God's providence is also extended to individuals according to their merit. Individual providence is therefore the result of divine overflow through the agent's intellect.⁵⁵² This is proven through his claim that:

“Divine providence is connected with divine intellectual overflow, and the same beings which are benefitted by the latter so as to become intellectual and to comprehend things, which are comprehensible to rational beings that are also under the control of divine providence, which examines all their deeds in order to reward or punish them”⁵⁵³

As explained by Maimonides, divine providence is extended to human beings in accordance with their merits of belief and obedience to God. It was certain to Maimonides that providence will abandon deficiency and endow perfection. Perfection is attained through physical disposition and efforts in reaching the highest state of humankind, intellectually and spiritually.⁵⁵⁴ Hence, the quality of a man denotes his inner form, not only the physical. With this individual endowment, it is thus clear that providence does not benefit the species as a whole. Furthermore, the species are merely classes of form in our minds, whereas in reality, they constitute distinguished

⁵⁵² Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 146

⁵⁵³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 287

⁵⁵⁴ It is clear in the qualities of Prophets like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua, as God said to Isaac for instance “I will be with thee, and I will bless thee” (Genesis 26: 3). The text also expresses the law of providence for the good and bad people as such “He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail” (I Sam 2: 9). Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 289

individuals. Besides, Maimonides emphasized the intellectual development of a being in attaining perfection.⁵⁵⁵

Only through this development can one attain greater providence, because divine providence is synonymous with divine intellect. Maimonides' theory of emanation that originated from Aristotle is therefore directly related to divine providence, whereby divine providence is consequent to divine overflow.⁵⁵⁶ Divine overflow is believed to be intellectual in essence, as man is endowed with intellect. Hence, man -- with the ability to act upon reason -- is therefore required to regulate their intellectual perfection in order to achieve divine providence. This can also be traced to Ibn Rushd's concept of providence. Nevertheless, their mutual acquaintance is yet to be known.⁵⁵⁷

The question of providence for good people upon whom calamities befall was addressed by Maimonides through the story of Job in the Book of Job. Although Job's existence is ambiguous, his story is nonetheless a useful lesson in apprehending God's omniscience and providence. To determine the cause of Job's doubt in his sufferings, Maimonides explained the factors that could contribute to unraveling the cause. The quote "As the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6 & 2:1) reflects that the main reason doubts emerged was Satan. However, Job believed differently. The cause of his misfortunes was not Satan but God Himself. Maimonides questioned the wisdom given to Job. If he was

⁵⁵⁵ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 289

⁵⁵⁶ Benor, Ehud. *Worship of the Heart: A Study in Maimonides' Philosophy of Religion*. (New York: University of New York Press), 140

⁵⁵⁷ Although Maimonides and Ibn Rushd lived in almost the same milieu, Maimonides did not mention Ibn Rushd in his writings. Nevertheless, some of their arguments are similar. Maimonides seemed to be more intrigued with Ibn Sīnā's version of Aristotle more than with Ibn Rushd's, which is partly why Maimonides did not mention Ibn Rushd much. However, in the theory of providence, Maimonides' argument seems to connote Ibn Rushd's theory of providence and creation. This can be seen in Ibn Rushd's concept of providence, where he proposes the argument of *'ināyah* (providence) and *ikhtirā'* (creation). First, the argument of *'inayah* suggests that nature and its order is definitely governed by knowledge and wisdom. This argument encourages people to investigate the creations of God. This leads to the second argument of *ikhtirā'*, which adduces that different levels of humans are based on their intellectual activity. See *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*.

given wisdom, doubts could not have occurred. According to Maimonides, only moral virtue and righteousness were attributed to him but not intelligence and wisdom. The verse “came to present themselves before the Lord” connotes God’s force in humans’ actions over their own desires, which is inferred from the words of Prophet Zechariah “These four winds of the heavens come forth from presenting themselves before the Lord of the whole earth” (Zechariah 6: 5). However, it is essential to distinguish that ‘the sons of God’ and ‘the universe’ are not the same to the adversary (Satan) since Satan does not possess power over his soul, unlike humans.⁵⁵⁸

Regarding Job’s sufferings, it was agreed that God was the cause. Job’s friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zofar offered advice and comforting words by reminding Job to be patient and convincing him that God will remove the mishaps and grieving through his good deeds and perseverance. However, Job was not in the slightest relieved or convinced. Instead, he accused God of neglecting humankind after He created them. This led to different opinions of providence. Some sages condemned Job’s response coarsely. However, Maimonides considered the opinions of other sages, who maintained that God ignored Job’s sins owing to his actions throughout his sufferings and he was thus excused from punishment. As for the three friends’ views, Maimonides recorded the differences among the three. Eliphaz stated that it was God’s justice to punish Job for his incumbent righteous actions that might not have been perfect in God’s eyes, as mentioned in Job 22:5. As for Bildad, he opined that misfortunes are considered rewards. Job’s innocence and misfortunes would lead him to bountiful rewards and pleasures in the future world, as subscribed in Job 8:6-7. On the other hand, Zofar held that all happened due to God’s divine will, as in Job 11:5-7.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 296

According to Zofar, man should not question God's will and actions or their purpose.⁵⁵⁹

Maimonides identified similarities between the opinions of Job's friends and the theologians as follows: Eliphaz's opinion is similar to what is taught in the Scriptures, Bildad's opinion resembles the Mu'tazilites' and Zofar's is akin to the Ash'arite . He then expounded the new theory proposed by Elihu, who disagreed with Job's approach to accepting his misfortunes. Elihu was deemed superior to the others by Maimonides. Elihu declared the intercession of angels on humans' lives by saving them from harm. But this did not always happen. He continued by giving metaphorical examples of the prophecy and transient acts of nature that cannot be apprehended by humans. Maimonides further added that if only Job is intellectually capable to understand God's actions through patience and did not complain, the situation would have been different.⁵⁶⁰ Here Maimonides claimed that Divine Providence constantly guards over those who obtain the intellectual overflow from God. There are also times when evil will attend to those who withdraw their attention from God or one is occupied with something else.⁵⁶¹ Maimonides explained that Job's good moral value is not sufficed in understanding God's actions. Thus, one must also use wisdom in order to understand God's providence as God's providence cannot be rationalized easily. This is similar to God's management and ruling, which are not the same as the way humans manage and rule.

Maimonides further refuted the theories of the philosophers and Ash'arite , who agreed that God's actions are based on purpose and His will respectively. He argued that those who affirm His actions based on His will may be entailed to a purposeless form of action, which is impossible of God. To Maimonides, God's will is

⁵⁵⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 299-303

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 301

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*, 385

only attributed to possibilities according to logical reasoning and acts upon His wisdom. He reiterated the concept of the creatio ex-nihilio of the universe without separating His wisdom from His will.⁵⁶²

Maimonides strongly disagreed with the Ash'arite . Maimonides found that the Ash'arite held God's actions as utterly purposeless and refused to accept creation as a result of His wisdom, in order to defend themselves against the theory of the eternity of the universe. He then concluded that the factors of man's confusion regarding the purpose of the universe emerged twofold: error and arrogance. He again emphasized that God's actions are the best actions based on His will and wisdom, which cannot be perceived by the human intellect.

In corresponding to Elihu, whom Maimonides regarded as closest to him, Maimonides affirmed that trials could precede sins in befalling human beings. Trials are considered opportunities for humans to gain rewards by being patient in overcoming the trials. Besides, they also aim to strengthen one's faith in God, as in the case of Abraham when he was required to sacrifice his son as mentioned in the Scriptures, "For now I know that thou fearest God" (Genesis 22:12). In fact, trials are meant to be guidance and instruction for humans and are not meant to be taken literally as instructed. Moreover, hardships and trials that befell the Israelites in the wild can be seen twofold. First is to see whether faith suffices to provide relief when someone is being tried or if it is preparation to serve as better well-being for someone facing a greater task. Second is in gaining opportunity for great rewards. Maimonides

⁵⁶² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 308-311. Maimonides' criticism of the Ash'arite , whom Maimonides claimed were employing will as the fundamental argument in determining rewards and punishment can be traced in al-Ghazālī's argument as well. Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite did not deny God's wisdom too in God's actions, as His power, will and knowledge must be concurrent with His actions. However, it can be seen that al-Ghazālī, who was on the same line of argument with the Ash'arite , strongly emphasized God's will in His actions as they refuted any obligations to be necessitated to God, such as the theory of providence that Maimonides and other philosophers and the Mu'tazilite upheld. Al-Ghazālī's notion was that God as the Agent certainly possessed will and wisdom. Unlike the term cause, which carries no will and wisdom.

concluded that in Abraham's sacrifice, two principles of faith can be extracted. One is the limit and fear of God in addressing any task and the other is that the Prophets' inspiration is certain and doubtless.⁵⁶³ It is intangible to associate God's actions to any flaws, as stated in the scripture "And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Ironically, man's actions can be categorized into four different types of values: purposeless, unimportant, useless and good.⁵⁶⁴ But in case of God, it is totally different.

In sum, it can be deduced that Maimonides in his explication of God's rewards and punishments combined the elements of Divine Providence from Aristotelian naturalism with the Law emphasizing God's Divine Volition, which is unknowable to the human intellect.

5.2.3 God's Will, Power and Knowledge

It is noteworthy to understand that Maimonides considered will, power and knowledge as part of God's relation to man and not as superadded attributes of God as mentioned in the previous chapter.⁵⁶⁵ Although these three elements sublime each of his actions, does not cause His product to be eternal just like His essence. This is because God's spiritual being transcends emanation and thus reflects through the intellectual capacity or natural causes. Maimonides first pointed out that God's will and power are unlike those of humans. If a man desires a house, he may or may not possess it due to

⁵⁶³ *Ibid*, 304-307

⁵⁶⁴ Purposeless indicates a pointless action that is worse than useless, since useless demonstrates an action that has a purpose but is not realized. Unimportant actions have a more complicated indication, whereby something might be important to someone but not to another. Therefore, only man's actions can be attributed to any of these qualities or flaws.

⁵⁶⁵ See chapter four on the discussion of attributes.

external causes. However, God's will is not limited to any consequences nor bounded by any external cause.⁵⁶⁶

In the discourse on God's will and power, Maimonides is observed to incorporate both God's will and power within man's free will or natural causes. Iterating Aristotle's idea of causation,⁵⁶⁷ Maimonides opted to depart from Aristotle's physics in exploring further the integration of Divine and man's will, which was not addressed by Aristotle. Maimonides thus attempted to strike a compatibilist approach between the determinist and the indeterminist.⁵⁶⁸

His attempt regarding the integration of God's will and humans can be observed in a paragraph recorded by Maimonides in his *Guide*:

“Direct your special attention to it more than you have done to the other chapters of this part. It is this, as regards the immediate causes of things produced, it makes no difference whether these causes consist of substances, physical properties, freewill or chance – by freewill I mean that of man -- or even in the will of another living being. The prophets ascribe the production directly to God and use such phrases as God has done it, commanded it or said it.”⁵⁶⁹

This passage appears to be very important as Maimonides urged the reader to pay special heed to his statement. From the above, it can be deduced that Maimonides argued that God is the one who provides will to animals and freewill to humans, while natural properties and accidents in the natural forces are mostly the combination of nature, desire and freewill. This integration may seem as a determinist approach as

⁵⁶⁶ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 249

⁵⁶⁷ In Aristotle's physics, it was mentioned in chapter three regarding his theory on necessary causation that serves as the fundamental thesis on the subject of the eternity of the universe. For Maimonides, his theory of causation does not suffice in explaining the divine will, as Aristotle only believed in natural causation. Maimonides even departed from Aristotle's eternal universe when he affirmed that the creation of the universe is a product of God's will as well.

⁵⁶⁸ The determinist approach employs God as the one who determines every human action with His will, power and knowledge. On the other hand, the indeterminist approach suggests humans have absolute free will and God has no power and will over humans and natural causation. Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 151

⁵⁶⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 249

commented by Rudavsky who finds that Maimonides' compatibility suggests a contradiction in itself.⁵⁷⁰

Despite Rudavsky's claim of contradiction, it can be seen that Maimonides managed to integrate both Divine and man's will. Even when God's will supersedes man's will, human are equipped with intellect and possess the power to choose. Human are indeed commanded to pursue the highest intellectual perfection, which will be explained in depth in the next subtopic on providence.

Maimonides added that man should not question what God wills. What man needs to know is that God's will is the cause of all existence. No existence can exist without God's will.⁵⁷¹ Maimonides explained that God's will should not be questioned, like why did God create the universe? To Maimonides, questioning His purpose leads to the purpose of God's existence, which is impossible for man to know.⁵⁷² Therefore, Maimonides summarized that all created beings are created for the sake of their existence alone and God's will. That is to say that the creation of the universe is for the sake of man and man's existence is to serve God. In this form of thinking, Maimonides explained that every creation is created for the benefit of humans, as in serving God, man will in return receive His providence. Although all creations benefits each other from the macro lens of nature, it only serves as the perfection of each creation of itself, which leads to the continuous cycle of generation

⁵⁷⁰ This is contradictory as mentioned by Rudavsky to what Maimonides' claimed in *The Guide* 3:17. Rudavsky opined that *The Guide* 3:17 suggests Maimonides' was an absolute indeterminist, while the previous passage demonstrates his determinist position. Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 153. Maimonides himself mentioned that his book is for the perplexed ones. Contradiction within his argument on the creation is discussed in the third chapter, as Maimonides attempts to interpret logical reason within revelation.

⁵⁷¹ Maimonides further affirmed God's will, where he departed from Aristotle's view on the creation of the universe. In his argument, he strongly held to the act of creation by God without denying the eternity of the universe of Aristotle.

⁵⁷² This is perhaps because Maimonides believed that God's will is not an attribute of Him but His own essence.

and destruction of forms.⁵⁷³ Here, Maimonides can be seen emulating Aristotle's view on attaining perfection of the form of matter on its own.

If one questions the purpose of serving God, Maimonides affirmed that it is the process of self-perfection that will eventually entail accepting God's greatness and His will as the main reasons for creation. Maimonides did not agree with the attitude of questioning the purpose of creation just as he rejected eternity. Nonetheless, he found Aristotle's argument on eternity more convincing and demonstrable. Thus, the Torah teaches that God created the universe by His will, which also denotes His wisdom. In other words, His will and wisdom can be explained through the necessary causal effect of Aristotle, which can be known as the divine intellect and cause.⁵⁷⁴

In elaborating the divine will, Maimonides went further by harmonizing astronomical findings with the Bible on the movements of the spheres and stars. To relate the creation of the spheres with that of human beings, Maimonides assumed that the purpose of the spheres is to accommodate human living. However, such statement seems implausible if it denotes an individual human being or only some. The vast creation of the spheres is logically incomparable to the minuteness of the human nature.⁵⁷⁵ Hence, it is more plausible if the creation of the spheres was aimed to govern the continuance of humankind as a whole. As human nature is inclined towards a continuation of production and destruction, it will remain infinitely.

Maimonides described God's power as being excluded from any impossibility. God can do what He wills and what He wants. There are no limits to His power. Opinions differ on whether impossibilities are categorized relatively through one's imagination or logical reasoning. Here, Maimonides reiterated the theologians' claim that it is possible for God's power to act upon impossibilities, such as the existence of

⁵⁷³ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 274-275

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 276

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 277

accidents independent of substance. On the other hand, the philosophers rejected ascribing any impossibilities of the intellect to God's power. Maimonides mentioned that impossibilities according to the philosophers are such as producing a square with a diagonal equal to one of the sides. The intellect will only allow tangible matters to occur;⁵⁷⁶ whereas imagination allows intangibles to be acted by God.⁵⁷⁷ Here, Maimonides aligned himself with the philosophers who rejected the idea of attaching impossibilities to God's power.⁵⁷⁸ Maimonides held the position that impossible instances are beyond God's power to create. Nevertheless, this position does not imply God's weaknesses or limited power. This is because impossible things will remain impossible and do not depend on the agent's action.⁵⁷⁹ This is perhaps the reason why Maimonides claimed that evil cannot be attributed to God, since it is impossible for intellectual reasoning for God to inflict bad fates on good people.

Hence, it can be observed that God's action must be concurrent with His will and power without negating man's will despite God's will being the end result of the occurrence. Nevertheless, God's action is not complete without His knowledge. To Maimonides, God's knowledge encompasses every single existence and its actions. Nothing is hidden from Him. Maimonides rejected the philosophers' opinion that God knows only Himself without knowing the particulars. Maimonides found this opinion

⁵⁷⁶ For instance, it is impossible for God to produce a being like Himself or to have a substance possess two opposite properties at the same time. Maimonides also mentioned there are some groups of philosophers who agree that impossible events might occur, such as the independence of accident from substance, like the Mu'tazilite. This type of group was not accepted by Maimonides, as they did not comply with philosophical reasoning and only concluded to defend their religious stance.

⁵⁷⁷ Maimonides mentioned that he would like to know further whether imagination or reason is the yardstick in recognizing possible and impossible. Maimonides seemed unsure with the faculty that distinguishes between the imagined things and things that are mentally conceived.

⁵⁷⁸ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 279. The philosophers agreed that even God cannot violate the law of non-contradictions. For instance, God cannot create another omnipotent deity and cannot annihilate Himself or become a body. God cannot make any contraries to come together at the same time or place or affect the transmutation of substance. These are logical impossibilities and cannot be attributed to God. See T.M Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 142

⁵⁷⁹ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 280

to be weak because God would be considered ignorant and weak in managing mankind's affairs.

In addition, Maimonides stressed that it is impossible for God's knowledge to be plural and temporal.⁵⁸⁰ On the other hand, God's foreknowledge when it takes place does not demonstrate any increase in His knowledge, as His knowledge of everything is comprehensive, yet does not mean plurality of His essence.

A question that arises is whether God's foreknowledge is affected by humans' free choice. If two, yet to be actualized states, for instance p and $\neg p$ are to be actualized, where to God's knowledge p is the one to be actualized, God's foreknowledge of the future contingent does not change the contingent's nature and neither is His knowledge altered by a change in the object of His knowledge. For God's knowledge of an object does not derive from the object. Rather, the object of knowledge is established as it is known within God's foreknowledge.⁵⁸¹

Maimonides claimed that various events are known to God before they take place. He constantly knows and therefore no fresh knowledge is acquired by Him. For instance, God knows that a person is non-existent at present and will exist at a certain time. When this person comes into existence in accordance with God's foreknowledge concerning the person, God's knowledge is not increased. This theory implies that God's knowledge extends to things not in existence and also includes infinites. Maimonides opined that it is possible to attribute to God the knowledge of a thing that does not yet exist, but the existence of which God foresees is able to affect. But that which never exists cannot be an object of His knowledge.

⁵⁸⁰ Maimonides affirmed that God's knowledge of many things does not imply any plurality. His knowledge does not change when the objects of His knowledge changes like humans. All events are within His knowledge before they occur. He constantly knows and He is not required to acquire new knowledge. Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 293

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid*, 294. See also Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 156

This demonstrates that God's knowledge does change the entity of an object to be necessary, the possible still remains possible. Although this perhaps appears not in parallel to the indeterminist approach, it has been echoed by Aristotle. Instead, Maimonides affirmed the Law's teaching as guidance in understanding God's knowledge. This is parallel to Maimonides fundamental argument on God's incorporeality. As Maimonides strongly believed that God's oneness of essence, including His knowledge, he firmly stressed that God must not be affected by the plurality and diversity of contingencies.

In addition, Maimonides rejected the idea that God is ignorant to certain things. This claim would denote a deficiency of God's quality. It is based on the existence of human reason and free will that would hinder God from knowing man's true intellect.⁵⁸²

Moreover, in affirming God's unity, it must be noted that no attributes ought to be parallelized with His essence. God's knowledge is therefore His essence and is incomprehensible to man's intellect. The term 'knowledge' connotes an equivocal meaning that must be distinguished from man's knowledge. According to Maimonides, man can only comprehend that God's essence means that God knows everything and nothing is hidden from Him.⁵⁸³

For Maimonides, it is essential to clarify that God's knowledge, as the Producer of things, differs from that of His productions or creations. God's knowledge certainly does not stem from the objects produced. If that were the case, God's

⁵⁸² Maimonides exemplified David's arguments of God's creation of the senses. It is certainly impossible for God to know human sight since the senses are all His creation; it is clearly intangible for God to be unknown to His own creation. Maimonides elaborated David's argument on the creation of the intellect endowed by God. David explained that the human intellect was created in such way that it cannot perceive God's true form and cannot perceive how it is possible for God to also be unknown to the intellect that He Himself created. Maimonides clearly concluded his objective of refuting those who claimed in the scripture "The Lord does not see us" (Ezek 8:12). Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 290-292

⁵⁸³ *Ibid*, 291

knowledge would be subject to plurality.⁵⁸⁴ Thus, it can be observed that Maimonides strongly affirmed that God's eternal knowledge is not hidden but encompasses everything without depending on change and plurality. This is evident in Maimonides' belief that God's knowledge is His essence.

It can be concluded that Maimonides clearly affirmed God's actions are related to God's will, power and knowledge. Everything that occurs must not be beyond the object of these three attributes. However, contingencies definitely do not affect God's attributes in any way, as these attributes are His essence and it demonstrates His relation to His creations. Addressing the issue of God's will, power and knowledge vis-à-vis human's will and power in no way disregards man's will and power. Humans have been endowed with responsibility in attaining intellectual perfection, as discussed in the previous subtopics on providence.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, Maimonides considered evil as a privation of something. Evil can only be linked to material substance and only relates to God indirectly. Hence, Maimonides claimed that God's acts are all good and man is the cause of all evil deeds. This is closely associated with Maimonides' theory of providence, in which he strongly upheld affirming moral responsibility.

It is also evident that Maimonides aimed to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with the law, and God's authoritative will with purpose of action. This is apparent through his providence theory that Maimonides adapted from Aristotle and altered according to the Law. The theory includes asserting God's providence, which

⁵⁸⁴ Maimonides then categorized God's eternal knowledge into three parts: pure spiritual, material and constant, and material and changeable. Material and constant relates to individual members, whereas material and changeable relates to individual beings according to eternal and constant laws. *Ibid*, 295

Maimonides extended to individual human beings instead of the sublunary universe per se as contested by Aristotle.

Besides, Maimonides was also inclined toward asserting God's superior will in every event that takes place. This can be traced back to Maimonides' earlier discussion on the created universe, where he incorporated divine will and particularization with necessary causation. Maimonides' notion of providence also reflects his view on omniscience, which demonstrates God's comprehensive and unchangeable knowledge despite the plurality of contingents. Nevertheless, God's foreknowledge does not negate man's free will. This can be drawn from Maimonides' emphasis on man's individual merits and intellectual perfection in attaining the providence of God.

5.3 Comparative Analysis on the Actions of God

According to prior discussion, several comparisons can be made between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides regarding their discourses on the actions of God. Three essential points can be deduced, namely the concept of bad and evil, rewarding good and bad, and God's will, power and knowledge.

5.3.1 The Concept of Evil

Regarding the concept of evil, the main topic discussed is why God permits the occurrence of evil when He is capable of deterring its existence. If God is claimed to be good and just, how can it be claimed that God creates evil? Or does evil occur through other agents?

Accordingly, al-Ghazālī discussed the concept of evil by first attempting to define evil. He initially distinguished between the quality of an essence and the quality

of an act. As mentioned by al-Ghazālī, it is clear that in perceiving the quality of an essence, the revelation becomes the scale for determining what is good and bad. Whatever things fulfill the purpose of the hereafter are considered good and things that do not fulfill the purpose of the hereafter are considered bad or evil.

On the other hand, the quality of an act is to be addressed relatively according to al-Ghazālī. Relative matters only occur in reference to one's acts, which may be deemed good by one and bad by another, if the evaluation of an act is solely based on one's intellect. Here, in relation to God's act, if one evaluates His act with the intellect per se, it will lead one to misconceive God, such as associating evil to God's acts.

In contrary, Maimonides explained evil much like the Neoplatonists, who deemed bad to be a privation of substance. In addressing the Scriptures' claim that whatever God creates is good since all existence is the creation of God, Maimonides argued that all evils, such as death, illness and poverty are privations that represent the absence of something. Maimonides adduced a connection between matter and evil. As evil is not an existing thing, it does not require a causal explanation. Maimonides can be seen very inclined towards the principle of materials that affect human behavior. Thus, he claimed that sins are the result of a person's material nature.

Perhaps it seemed to al-Ghazālī that the rational faculty does not have any role in defining evil. Whereas Maimonides defined evil through physical demonstration of the proposition of matter.

Alternatively, al-Ghazālī suggested that man should not presume God's actions as being good or bad, as that would lead to obligating God with something; the definition of obligation is that if something is not fulfilled, harm will be inflicted. Inflicting harm to God is totally absurd. Thus, al-Ghazālī found that the mistake in associating God with evil essentially lies in the misconception of man. According to al-Ghazālī, man tends to judge according to personal perception and desire, which

leads to generalizing views when it comes to normative perceptions, and advances illusions unto the unknown by presupposing their normative relation to the unknown. Hence, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī prohibited referring any presumptions to God.

According to al-Ghazālī's suggestion, what man sees as good and bad are both God's creations. Although this consequently proposes a negative perception of God, al-Ghazālī rebutted this by arguing that humans cannot determine what is good and what is bad according to God's evaluation. There might be things that are bad according to humans but good according to God's wisdom and vice versa. When bad things happen or privation occurs, it is improbable for man to claim that God inflicted a tyrannous act. Al-Ghazālī reiterated many times in his writing that God is the agent of every creation. Therefore, how is it possible for man to assume that the Creator is bad when the whole universe belongs to Him and He is absolutely free to do anything with His own creations, even by withdrawing things from someone?

Meanwhile, Maimonides was opposed to the idea of a God who inflicts bad things on people, as He is the perfect Divine Being. Thus, Maimonides only ascribed evil to human acts. God only causes evil indirectly, as evil was considered by Maimonides to be non-existent, which is impossible for God to create. Maimonides' concept of bad seems similar to the Mu'tazilite who repudiated evil as being associated with God. It is mentioned in their theory of *al-salah wa al-aslah* (good and salutation) that God is compelled to reward good doers.

Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides differ on the notion of evil in their logical orientations. Al-Ghazālī focused on God's supreme power while Maimonides attempted to incorporate Aristotle's theory of movement within the discussion on the origin of evil. It is apparent that their difference emerged from their application of reason and revelation, where Maimonides ascribed reason above revelation. Although

Maimonides believed that everything happens through God's will, he nevertheless could not explain how His will is related to bad events. The notion that God cannot be associated with bad events precedes the law, which mentions "All His ways are justice" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Al-Ghazālī also affirmed that God is just and strongly emphasized God's omnipotence. Nobody may decide what is good or bad according to God. Likewise, nothing should be obligatory for God. If that occurred, it would defeat the purpose of God being omnipotent.

It can be observed that Maimonides' opinion contrasts al-Ghazālī, who proposed God is the agent of all existences. Al-Ghazālī's opinion can be seen closer to the revelation in accepting that God is the creator. As an alternative in harmonizing the revelation with human understanding of God, al-Ghazālī commanded man not to advocate obligation unto God. Meanwhile, Maimonides could not inflict God with any notion of evil. Instead, Maimonides associated evil with the privation of matter, where man is the direct agent and the privation of matter cannot be directly associated with God. Maimonides' conceptualization of evil was supported with the Neoplatists' theory of evil and divine providence, which stems from accepting logical reasoning above revelation. It can be concluded that al-Ghazālī's conception of evil may be construed negatively on the surface, whereas it actually upholds God's total supremacy in comparison to Maimonides' theory that obligates God with purposes.

In sum, it is observed that al-Ghazālī placed revelation above logical reasoning. In contrary, Maimonides attempted as much as possible to clarify evil in its physical form so it can be understood through man's intellect. This is the root of misconceptions, as al-Ghazālī adduced happens when one tries to explain what is good and bad depending merely on an intellectual scale.

5.3.2 Rewards and Punishments

God rewarding good and bad doers has always been central in the discussion on God's actions. The most common question raised are 'Is it necessary for God to reward good deeds and punish bad deeds?' It can be observed that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides totally differed in addressing this. Generally, al-Ghazālī was firm in refuting obligatory presumption towards God through defining the concept of good, evil and obligatory in the previous discussion. Maimonides on the other hand affirmed God's providence as iterated by the peripatetic philosophers, which suggests obligation towards God in terms of rewarding His servants.

According to al-Ghazālī's theory of rewards, God may or may not reward His servants who have done good deeds. There is no obligation for God to reward humans. Likewise, it is not necessary for God to inflict torment to the transgressors. This is because responsibility (*taklif*) is the obligation of the servants themselves and they have no right to request or demand rewards from God. Meanwhile, Maimonides' concept of rewards is deliberated in the theory of providence, whereby providence will only be obtained by good doers with good intellectual and moral conducts, which is reiterated as part of Aristotle's idea.

It can be observed that Maimonides' theory of providence entails necessitating God with acts of reward and punishment. For, in this concept, providence will be given only to those with high intellect and moral conduct per se, as Maimonides believed that God's intellect is the first intellect that emanated within the intelligible. This indirectly entails the necessitation of God's action, which is contradictory to what al-Ghazālī emphasized regarding the non-obligating nature of God's actions.

According to al-Ghazālī, it is not necessary for God to care for the well-being of His creations. As when one posits that God is required to reward him with a good

life, it is similar to obligating God with responsibility and obligation according to al-Ghazālī's definition of actions that lead to harm when one abandons them, which is impossible to God. On the other hand, it is worth noting that generally, al-Ghazālī also claimed that God can never go against His promises to reward, as mentioned in the Qur'an.

Apart from that, Maimonides' concept of providence does not benefit all species as a whole. Maimonides' theory of providence, although being a reiteration of Aristotle's, is somewhat different. Aristotle only included the superlunary orderings - things which are constantly moving - as part of God's providence. Meanwhile, Maimonides' theory of providence also includes man, which is intertwined with the theory of intellectual perfection. Maimonides held that God's providence will only be given to those who attempt to attain closeness to God through intellectual perfection. As God possesses the Active Intellect which overflows to other creation, it is man's responsibility to put effort into grasping the highest intellectual perfection and His providence.

In addition to the divine providence that was based on the divine overflow through intellectual perfection, Maimonides also responded to the account of Job's sufferings. It can be observed that Maimonides employed this account as scriptural support for his own theory of providence. Maimonides described Job only as morally good and righteous but not as possessing wisdom. For, if he was wise, he could have embraced his situation better. According to Maimonides, Job eventually understood that the human intellect does not suffice in understanding God's actions. Thus, Maimonides also reinforced the difference between God's rule, providence and intention to all natural forces with our rules, providence and intentions in reference to objects within our reach.

The situation of Job – a righteous man tested with suffering - can also be seen in al-Ghazālī's discussion that claims that it is according to God's will and one cannot deter God from inflicting sufferings on anyone, even the prophets who are considered among the most righteous of men. This was likewise mentioned by al-Ghazālī, that God can assign what is beyond one's capability just like what occurred in the account of Job. Thus, it can be seen that al-Ghazālī strongly emphasized God's will in relation to God's actions, where man is not capable to understand His actions through the intellect. Al-Ghazālī's emphasis on God's will is also mentioned in Maimonides' categorization of different opinions of providence, which is classified similarly to the Ash'arite s' stance. In this context, suffering can be seen as neither a reward nor punishment but rather a test for man.

Another issue regarding providence that distinguished al-Ghazālī from Maimonides is that Maimonides did not claim that God's providence encompasses the particular object of animals. He also did not incorporate the relation of providence with falling leaves. This suggests Maimonides' limitation in his proposition on providence, which is deeply rooted in the intellectual factors per se.

On the other hand, al-Ghazālī's view concerning this matter strongly incorporates God's will as the force within every occurrence, be it rational or irrational beings.

Apparently, Maimonides' theory of Divine Providence of Aristotelianism is combined with the Mosaic emphasis on Divine Will and Volition. Maimonides' affirmation of will can be seen resembling al-Ghazālī's claim. Except that Maimonides' theory of Divine Providence based on the Divine overflow is something that al-Ghazālī strongly refuted, which he extensively explained regarding the error of obligating presumptions unto God's actions with intellect. This was likewise mentioned before in the theory of necessary causation, which necessitates causal

occurrences as part of God's emanation. Al-Ghazālī was nevertheless not against moral perfection and making an effort to gain God's rewards, which Maimonides also mentioned regarding Job. However, al-Ghazālī affirmed that man must not necessitate God to offer rewards in return for their good deeds.

As demonstrated above, it can be summed that al-Ghazālī's approach in embracing an understanding of God's rewards and punishments is majorly dependent on the law rather than logical reasoning. This is apparent in his affirmation of God's will over human presumptions of God that eventually leads to obligating God with certain actions. Maimonides on the other hand reiterated Aristotle's work, which he modified to become in line with the Mosaic teaching. This is evident in Maimonides' reconciliation of Divine Providence with the affirmation of Divine Will and Volition.

5.3.3 God's Will, Power and Knowledge

In the discourse regarding God's will, power and knowledge in reference to God's actions, two important issues were addressed by al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. One, does God determine every occurrence and does man have no will and power over his own actions? Two, does man's action occur according to God's foreknowledge or is God's knowledge consequent to man's actions? These two questions determine the difference between the compatibilist or incompatibilist approaches that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides presented in the discussion of God's actions vis-à-vis humans' actions. The determinist is committed to God's foreknowledge while the indeterminist affirms human freedom.

It is apparent that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides equally stressed upon God's will as being the cause behind every occurrence. This can be seen in both their theories of the creation of the universe and particularization, which maintain that creation

occurs out of God's divine will. Nevertheless, their conceptual understanding of attributes somewhat differed, as al-Ghazālī believed that God wills with His attribute of will that subsists in His essence. It is neither His essence nor other than His essence. Meanwhile, Maimonides affirmed that God wills with His essence. Maimonides affirmed that God's will only demonstrates His relation with occurrences. The divergence, however, did not cause any major implications in the discussion of God's action. However, on the fundamental understanding of God's attributes, it does impose a major implication as discussed in the previous chapter.

Another divergence that is observed between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides is that al-Ghazālī strongly affirmed God's will in demonstrating His role as an agent. Al-Ghazālī distinguished between God's will and man's will in relation with an occurrence. God's will occurs with power and knowledge, while man's will or other agents may cause an occurrence to take place with or without knowledge. Thus, al-Ghazālī considered it to be an agent metaphorically. While God is considered as the real agent behind every occurrences.

Maimonides also distinguished between God's will and man's will. God's will according to him will necessarily happen. Man's will in contrary may occur or may not occur. Nevertheless, Maimonides did not emphasize God's agency through His will as al-Ghazālī argued. This is due to Maimonides' belief in the theory of causation, which was in line with the philosophers.

Maimonides believed that God's will requires no purpose, but God's actions that derive from His will and wisdom are full of purpose. This is proven in accordance to the Law that affirms God's actions as being all good.⁵⁸⁵ For instance, Maimonides highlighted the Divine as prior to the creation of the universe and therefore the purpose is unquestionable and remains unknown. However, at the human level of

⁵⁸⁵ "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good" (Genesis 1:31)

understanding, Maimonides also agreed that the purpose of creation is to sustain humanity, which eventually leads to human perfection.⁵⁸⁶ Maimonides nevertheless seemed to ignore the relation between bad events and God's will, as he claimed that evil happens through matter and not a direct result of God's will.⁵⁸⁷

In contrary, al-Ghazālī held that the purposes which man determines as being the creation of God, which seems to be impractical, should not be considered against God's wisdom. In fact, man has no right to determine what is best and what is evil in God's actions. Good and evil are only determined by the Law as mentioned above. Therefore, everything that happens to man, be it good or bad, takes place with God's permission and will. It can be deduced here that al-Ghazālī affirmed that God's will should not depend upon human purpose. Whereas Maimonides dictated purpose to every action of God, although His will does not require any purpose – something that leads to the negation of evil as a form of God's will. The difference is that al-Ghazālī's position refused to decree any necessities unto God, instead returning the matter fully to God's power and will. Meanwhile, Maimonides attempted to incorporate rational resolution in solving the debate on evil in relation to God's will.

One thing that is certain is that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides affirmed that human will is directly created by God. As noted by al-Ghazālī in his *Iḥya'*,

“The actions of man, although they are his acquisition (*kasb*), are nevertheless willed by God. Neither a twinkling of an eye nor a stray thought of a heart ever occurs, either in the visible or the invisible world except through His decree and will. He is the source of good and evil, benefit and harm, belief and unbelief, knowledge and ignorance, success and failure, orthodoxy and heresy, obedience and disobedience, monotheism and polytheism. There is none that rescinds His commands and none that supplements His decrees”⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ This nevertheless subsequently entails the necessitation of God's actions in providing good and bad lives according to the divine providence that is only available for human perfection.

⁵⁸⁷ Sokol, Moshe. “Maimonides on Freedom of the Will and Moral Responsibility.” *The Harvard Theological Review*. 91 (1). 1998, Pp 25-39.

⁵⁸⁸ Al-Ghazālī. *Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*. 100

In proposing this, al-Ghazālī is observed to base his argument on the Qur'an⁵⁸⁹ that stresses God's superior will and that man could not question His will. This can also be seen in Maimonides' *Guide*:

"It is God that gave will to dumb animals, free will to human beings and natural properties to everything and accidents that originate in the redundancy of some natural force and are mostly the result of the combined action of nature, desire and free will. It can be consequently said of everything which is produced by any of these causes, that God commanded that it should be made or said 'Let it be thus'."⁵⁹⁰

It can be deduced that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides accepted the superiority of God's will above humans' despite affirming humans' free will as well. The question here is whether humans truly possess their own free will, where according to both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, man's will is also created by God. Hence, how can man act upon his will? This certainly leads to a paradoxical view. In addressing this matter, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides both stressed upon human responsibility and effort.

Al-Ghazālī advocated the theory of *kasb* (acquisition), where in al-Ghazālī's opinion, God created for humans the power to move. Hence, to cause movement man requires power that is derived from man's own acquisition (*kasb*). According to al-Ghazālī, there are two main types of movement: compelled and free. Therefore, man's free will is classified as free movement granted by God to humans. Whereas compelled movements are efforts that do not require any attempt by humans, for instance shivering due to cold temperatures.⁵⁹¹ In the case of Maimonides, he believed that humans' free will entails their individual merit. This is then related to Maimonides' theory of providence. Providence is extended varyingly according to the

⁵⁸⁹ "He shall not be asked for His doing but they shall be asked" (Qur'an 21:23) and in another verse "Had We pleased We had certainly given to every soul its guidance" (13:31)

⁵⁹⁰ Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 249

⁵⁹¹ Al-Ghazālī. *Iḥyā' 'Ulum al-Din*. 99

human level of intellectual perfection.⁵⁹² Maimonides contended that man holds absolute free will in parallel with the Law. As noted in his Guide:

“Man does what is in his power to do, by his nature, his choice and his will and his action is not due to any faculty created for the purpose. All species of irrational animals likewise move by their own free will. This is the will of God, it is due to the eternal divine will that all living beings should move freely, and that man should have power to act according to his will or choice within the limits of his capacity”⁵⁹³

It can be concluded in the discourse of God’s will and power in relation with His actions that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides were both inclined towards reconciling the divine will with man’s will. Al-Ghazālī proposed the theory of *iktisab* (effort), which is within man’s capability. Similarly, Maimonides believed that man possesses the capability to control his desire through moral training that commands one to put effort into avoiding bad desires. In reconciling the theory of determinism and human freedom, it may be argued that al-Ghazālī asserted that man’s responsibility (*taklif*) and free will do not necessitate God to offer rewards or punishments. On the other hand, Maimonides’ indeterminism is reflected in his theory of moral responsibility and intellectual perfection.⁵⁹⁴ It can be seen that both held a similar argument in harmonizing the determinist and indeterminist approaches, which was demonstrated through the responsibility of man to act upon the law. The concept of retribution certainly cannot deny man’s freedom.

Apart from the discussion of God’s will and power adjacent to His action, the question of determinism and predestination also relies heavily on God’s knowledge of

⁵⁹² Maimonides. *The Guide of the Perplexed*. 285

⁵⁹³ *Ibid*

⁵⁹⁴ This argument can be demonstrated through the investigation of Maimonides’ writing in Mishneh Torah, where he attempted to relate responsibility and freedom by asserting in *Teshuva* 5.4: “Know that everything is in accordance with the divine will, even though we have freedom of will. How? Just as the creator wills that fire and air ascend...so He wills that humankind be free and his actions up to him, that there be no necessity or pull upon him, but that he himself of his own, with his mind that God gave him, do all that a person can do. Therefore he is judged by his actions; if he does good he is rewarded and if he does evil he is punished.” Moshe Sokol. “Maimonides on Freedom of the Will and Moral Responsibility.” *The Harvard Theological Review*. 91 (1). 1998, Pp 25-39.

the future, better known as His foreknowledge. Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides adduced God's knowledge to incorporate the past, future and present. God's foreknowledge however, which incorporates future events, raises an issue. If God's knowledge necessitates the contingent, man's free will is not relevant anymore as everything has already been determined by God. This is the determinist's argument. Contrarily, the indeterminist might claim that man determines his own action, thus God's knowledge is dictated by man's action and eventually God becomes ignorant. This totally denies God's comprehensive knowledge. Therefore, it can be observed that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides advocated harmonizing God's foreknowledge with man's free will.

Before addressing the determinist and indeterminist approaches, it is essential to discuss the fundamental concept of God's knowledge according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, as it establishes their argument on the compatibilist and incompatibilist approaches. Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides were also on the same page in arguing that God's infinite knowledge does not multiply with the diversity of accidents. The transient things that occur do not in any way affect God's oneness. Moreover, God's knowledge extends to the past, present and future. Meanwhile, in the discussion of God's knowledge adjacent to the object of knowledge, al-Ghazālī claimed that all contingents, whether possible or impossible, existing or non-existing, are within His knowledge. God knows the possibilities due to exist or not to exist. Here, it is discerned that the scope of God's knowledge extends to things that are not in existence or are impossible to happen. However, Maimonides circumscribed God's knowledge to things that may only possibly happen, whereby he argued that God's knowledge does not extend to absolute non-existing things.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁵ Maimonides advocated that God's knowledge extends to things that are not yet in existence, whereby God foresees and is able to affect. This claim is supported through distinguishing absolute from relative

According to al-Ghazālī, God's knowledge does not necessitate things that are yet to be generated, for God's knowledge can be either generated or non-generated as it includes the possible and impossible. Al-Ghazālī agreed that everything must first be known to God, which is followed by His will, since the object of will is of the necessary known to the one who wills. As far as human freedom is concerned, God's knowledge is unknowable to humans.

Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides described God's knowledge as infinite and unchangeable. To demonstrate this, al-Ghazālī claimed that God's divine knowledge differs from that of humans by nature of apprehending objects, where known objects are derived from His knowledge and known objects do not affect His knowledge.⁵⁹⁶ Besides, man's knowledge is limited in quantity and is thus finite to the past. Al-Ghazālī argued God's unchangeable knowledge from the perspective of superadded attributes. God's attribute of knowledge is not affected by contingents, especially His essence, as His knowledge is understood to be a superadded attribute. Thus, in no way does it affect the plurality of God's essence and at the same time His attributes, as the eternal does not stem from the contingent nor does it become active prior to the contingent. Although every contingent happens according to God's knowledge, it does not necessarily relate to causal changes that would determine each contingent.⁵⁹⁷ Hence, man's freewill is still relevant vis-a-vis God's foreknowledge.

Maimonides similarly argued that God's knowledge is endless and does not cause plurality with the plurality of contingents. It does not change with the existence of a contingent. Thus, it is asserted that God's knowledge of future contingents does not alter their contingent nature and God's nature is also not altered by any changes in

non-existence. Maimonides stated that absolute non-existence could never be an object of God's knowledge while relative non-existence is within His knowledge. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 294. See also Rudavsky. *Maimonides*. 155

⁵⁹⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*. 165. See also Toha Dusuqi al-Hubaisyi, *Al-Jānib al-Ilāhī fī Fikri al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 240

⁵⁹⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. 146

objects known by Him. His knowledge is not the result of observing an event, but that event happens according to His knowledge. According to Maimonides, the human intellect cannot comprehend the way and knowledge itself in which God knows. Because God knows with His essence and His essence is totally unknown to human perception.⁵⁹⁸ If one understands that God's knowledge differs from humans' and is unknown to man, the problem does not rise. The point is that God's knowledge is a problem for our free will, moreover affirming God's knowledge to the chain of causalities.

It can be seen that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed upon the equivocal nature of God's knowledge vis-a-vis human knowledge, thus affirming that how God knows is unknown to humans. What is required within man's knowledge is to affirm that all contingencies are within God's knowledge and it is impossible for God to be ignorant.

Both scholars affirmed God's comprehensive and holistic knowledge, which incorporates particulars, the past, present and future, infinite and unchangeable, and that differs from human acquisition of knowledge. They only differed on their position on the attributes of knowledge, where al-Ghazālī posited knowledge to be eternal attributes superadded and subsisting in God's essence, while Maimonides believed that God knows with His essence. This certainly distinguishes their concepts of God's knowing and His relation with creations.

It can also be noted that in discussing the determinist and indeterminist approaches to demonstrate a compatibilist stance, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides upheld a determinist approach in proposing God's eternal and supreme foreknowledge that causes contingencies. However, their affirmation of God's foreknowledge

⁵⁹⁸ Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 294. See also Rynhold. *An Introduction to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. 162

nevertheless does not negate human freedom, as they both affirmed human acquisition and moral responsibility to be imposed on man.

As a whole, al-Ghazālī's approach on God's action incorporates His will and power as the direct cause of producing contingencies. Everything that occurs within God's will and power must be the objects of His knowledge. Meanwhile, Maimonides affirmed that God's actions are demonstrated through His knowledge, whereby His essence and knowledge are considered one. Everything that happens is within God's corpus of knowledge. Will and power are demonstrated as part of His relation with the creations. God's actions can basically be seen through His will and power in addition to the causal contingencies that occur through the concept of the actualization of potentialities.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

According to the above explanation, it is obvious that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides differed in their opinion on the concept of bad and evil in relation with God's position as the Most Just and Kind.

Al-Ghazālī adduced that the quality of God's act may at times seem unfavourable to humans. Al-Ghazālī affirmed that God's scale is totally different from humans, as He is the Omniscient. Thus, man is not in the position to determine God's actions as either good or bad. On the other hand, Maimonides claimed that evil is directly connected to material beings and only relates to God indirectly. Hence, evil stems from man's own actions and not from God. God only creates matter and man turns the matter into evil. Their differences lie basically in the means of intellectual implications in comprehending God's actions in relation to evil. Al-Ghazālī justified the meaning of evil and obligation as having to be understood correctly before judging

God. Maimonides reiterated the philosophical demonstration of perceiving the concept of evil.

In addressing rewards and punishments, al-Ghazālī once again delineated a correct method of intellectual perception that man should possess. Al-Ghazālī repudiated man's presumptions of God in determining when God should reward or punish. An incorrect form of thinking will lead to obligating God, which is totally unacceptable regarding God. Maimonides proposed the concept of providence, which was supported by the Mosaic Law of will and volition. Maimonides argued that rewards and punishments can be understood through the notion of providence, where intellectual perfection becomes the yardstick. In addition, Maimonides also did not deny God's volition, which is unquestionable to man in understanding His acts of rewarding and punishing.

Meanwhile, in addressing God's power, will and knowledge, it is apparent that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides supported a compatibilist approach that strikes a middle path between the determinism and indeterminism of man's actions vis-à-vis God's. Both scholars acknowledged God's supreme power above man's power. Neither denied man's power to choose and act upon the intellect. Here, al-Ghazālī introduced the concept of *kasb* (acquisition), whereas Maimonides adduced the providence theory, by which those who act upon intellectual and moral responsibility will acquire God's providence.

Regarding God's knowledge of the future, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides agreed that God has knowledge of the past, present and future, which does not in any way cause plurality of God's essence or affect His transcendence. Both also asserted that God's comprehensive knowledge does not deny the probability of man's actions. Nevertheless, due to different understandings of the concept of God's attributes, they contrasted. Al-Ghazālī understood God's attributes to be superadded to His essence

while Maimonides negated associating attributes with God. This demonstrates Maimonides' emphasis on the incomprehensibility of the divine attributes.

However, al-Ghazālī's notion of superadded attributes led him to affirm God's eternal essence, which cannot be distorted by contingents. Apart from that, both scholars differed on the understanding of good and evil. Al-Ghazālī posited God's power and will above anything else. In contrary, Maimonides, through his theory of divine providence, did not allow for the possibility of such thing to take place.

To sum up, it is obvious that in affirming God's acts as Divine acts, al-Ghazālī adduced a stringent approach to affirming God's superiority above anything else. This is apparent in the repudiation of any obligations upon God, for instance in determining rewards and suffering. Conversely, Maimonides, who was rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, adapted the theory on divine providence and intellectual perfection, which indirectly applies the possibility of necessity for God's actions upon man. Maimonides' concept of providence with rewarding good doers and punishing bad doers may perhaps seem logic to our rationale while inflicting torment to Samaritans may seem very unfair of God. Nevertheless, Maimonides may have just forgotten that God is off the scale. Obligating God on what to do only negates His wisdom.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This final chapter summarizes the preceding discussions. It consists of three main arguments as well as a final conclusion to encapsulate this research. Three main parts regarding the discourse on the existence of God, His attributes and actions will be deduced according to the comparative analyses at the end of the respective chapters. A deliberation of the major similarities and differences between the two scholars' discussions on these three subjects will follow.

6.1 Existence and Anthropomorphism of God According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

On the topic of God's existence, three fundamental questions are addressed. First, how did al-Ghazālī and Maimonides prove God's existence? Second, how did al-Ghazālī and Maimonides understand God's existence in relation to the universe and other creations? Do occurrences happen through natural courses or through God's will and particularization? Third, how did al-Ghazālī and Maimonides interpret God's incorporeality in reading anthropomorphic verses? All these questions are discussed and an analysis of the findings is summarized as follows.

Table 6.1.1 : Existence of God According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

NO	ISSUES	AL-GHAZĀLĪ	MAIMONIDES	ANALYSIS
1	Proofs of God's existence	<p>-Necessary existence</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)</i></p>	<p>-Necessary existence</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>-Al-Ghazālī nullified the concept of potential and actual with the proposition of necessary existence in light of his strong refutation of peripatetic philosophy.</p> <p>-Maimonides, on the other hand, fully adopted Ibn Sīnā's proposition on the potentiality of forms.</p> <p>-Maimonides further categorized necessary existence in two forms: necessary on its own account and necessary due to external factors.</p> <p>-Al-Ghazālī entirely refuted the concept of necessary existence twofold, as it entails annulling God's omnipotence in His relation with creations and it entails dualism in understanding the eternal.</p>
2	Cosmological argument	<p>-Every temporal being has a cause for its beginning; the universe is temporal; therefore the universe must possess a cause for its beginning</p>	<p>-The universe is either eternal or created</p> <p>-If it is eternal, it proves God's unity and incorporeality</p> <p>-If it is created, it proves there must be a creator</p>	<p>-Al-Ghazālī strongly affirmed that God created the universe out of nothing with His power. It is impossible that the universe is eternal like God.</p>

		<p>-Created universe</p> <p>-God as the Agent</p> <p>-Direct power as the Creator</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)</i></p>	<p>-Created universe</p> <p>-Prime matter is created without potential</p> <p>-First cause is the Agent</p> <p>-Influence through emanation</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>-Maimonides reiterated Plato who advocated prime matter as co-existing with God. He attempted to incorporate philosophical theory with the Law. Thus, his perception is that whether the world is created out of nothing or pre-existing matter remains unknown.</p>
3	Causality	<p>-Employed the term <i>sabab</i> instead of <i>'illah</i>, which leads to necessary causation</p> <p>-Did not reject the natural course</p> <p>-Affirmed God's direct interference in every occurrence</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Tahāfut al-Falāsifah)</i></p>	<p>-Accepted the theory of necessary causation through his affirmation of the concept of potential and actual</p> <p>-Employed the concept of emanation as well in demonstrating God's relation with His creations</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>- Al-Ghazālī refuted necessary causation. Likewise, Maimonides also agreed with the impossibility of infinite regress of succession, with such leading to the eternity of the universe. Nevertheless, he still advocated the theory of potential and actual, which is contradictory to al-Ghazālī's theory of possibility. This theory readily subsists within the emanation theory God is exempted from any potential event as He is the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible.</p> <p>-Al-Ghazālī refuted the concept of potential and</p>

				actual through the argument of <i>maṭālib al-sab'ah</i> \
4	Particularization argument	-Affirm God's will and particularization -God particularizes between two opposites -God's will <i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Taḥāfut al-Falāsifah)</i>	-Affirm God's will and particularization only upon understanding the spherical design -Affirm the necessary effect of causation as well understanding the concept of occurrences <i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i>	-Al-Ghazālī strongly affirmed God's will in every occurrence. God particularizes between two opposites - Maimonides' theory of free will only tends to release God from the notion of eternity.

With respect to God's existence, both scholars agreed with Ibn Sīnā's notion of God's necessary existence. They differed in terms of conceptualizing necessary existence. Al-Ghazālī nullified the concept of potential and actual with the proposition of necessary existence, since he strongly refuted peripatetic philosophy. Maimonides, on the other hand, fully adopted Ibn Sīnā's proposition on the potentiality of forms. Maimonides further categorized necessary existence in two: necessary on its own account and necessary due to external factors. Al-Ghazālī entirely refuted the twofold concept of necessary existence, as it causes the annulation of God's omnipotence in His relation with creations and it entails dualism in understanding the eternal.

The second matter regards the cosmological argument. The discussion on cosmology is mainly a deliberation on the relationship of God with the creation of the universe. Apparently, at the surface both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides believed the universe was created by God as described in both the Qur'an and the Jewish Bible. However, they diverged in their deliberation on the concept of creation. Al-Ghazālī understood that God created the universe with His will and power out of non-

existence. Maimonides, in contrast, perceived creation based on Aristotelian propositions of the eternal and further complemented Plato's notion of eternal matter. Maimonides found a demonstrative proposition by Aristotle but could not relate it to the Scriptures. This led him to consider Plato's version of creation, which is to associate necessary existence due to external factors with the eternal matter that God used to create the universe and through which the universe emanated. Maimonides could not accept the notion of creation out of nothingness. For Maimonides, God initiates form into matter as He pleases and constantly creates other things as and when He wills, for God is the cause of every existence just like clay is to the potter or iron is to the smith. Prime matter is created, but in a different way from other creations, and it can be destroyed in the same manner as man is reduced to dust. Matter is created from nothing and since its creation has its own properties, it becomes the source of every generation and destruction. Al-Ghazālī rejected this claim completely, as according to him, this would cause a dualistic understanding of eternal existence.

The cosmological debate also encompasses the argument of causality and particularization, on which al-Ghazālī and Maimonides had somewhat similar opinions on the surface but differed especially with regards to the theory of particularization. In the discussion on causality, it is quite obvious that al-Ghazālī totally rejected necessary causation, for it would entail necessity for God's power and deny God's will. Al-Ghazālī intensely demonstrated his argument on the inadmissibility of potential and actual forms of substances. Al-Ghazālī believed that every occurrence that takes place is the result of God's eternal power and will. His strong repudiation is apparent as he elaborated seven forms of argument on the nature of substance, which demonstrate the absurdity of two accidents inherent within a substance in a single moment. Thus, the idea of subsistent potential within a form was completely illogical to al-Ghazālī. Nevertheless, he did not deny the constant habitual course of nature that he understood

as the execution of God's plan (*sunnatulLāh*). However, occurrences can possibly happen out of the constant course that transpires through God's will.

Maimonides conversely strongly affirmed necessary causation that occurs through the process of actualizing the potentialities of forms. It is observed that Maimonides reiterated the peripatetic philosophers' discourse on necessary causation. In addition, Maimonides affirmed the emanative theory of God as a way to understand God's relation with the universe. This theory suggests that God is the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. Thus, God inheres in every occurrence. Al-Ghazālī fully rejected the emanative theory, as it assumes contingencies in God's essence. Alternatively, al-Ghazālī proposed eternal attributes subsistent in God, which act as the relation between God and His creations.

Apart from the argument on causality, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides equally relied on the theory of particularization in explicating the relation between God and the universe. Al-Ghazālī did not only relate to the creation and design of the universe as a result of God's particularization. He strongly emphasized God's will and particularization in each occurrence. According to al-Ghazālī, God's will acts as the preponderance in determining between two opposites of every possibility. Thus, every occurrence requires God's will for it to be produced. Nothing can happen without God's will. This stream of argument was obvious with the Ash'arite as well, who argued that the generation and destruction of atoms in any occurrence is through God's will. The Ash'arite believed that God creates and destroys all instance. Each accident attached to a substance is created by God and nothing can occur without His knowledge, will and power.

Maimonides only affirmed particularization in perceiving God's creation of the spheres. He found that the arbitrariness of the spherical design could not be explained through man's intellect and must therefore only be surrendered to God's

particularization. Maimonides also affirmed that the creation of the universe is out of God's will. Apart from sustaining particularization, Maimonides simultaneously asserted the concept of potential and actual, which support necessary causation. Thus, it is clear that Maimonides' notion of particularization is unlike al-Ghazālī. Maimonides approved of both particularization and causation: particularization in terms of spherical design and causation in terms of the production of contingencies. However, al-Ghazālī maintained that God's will and particularization transpire from the creation of the universe with constant contingencies. Al-Ghazālī differentiated between cause that possesses will, who is God, and cause that does not possess will, which is the habitual course of nature. In contrast, Maimonides appears to reiterate the peripatetic view in not distinguishing between these two causes, which ultimately leads to a more perplexing understanding of the relation between God and His creations.

It can be concluded that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides mainly parted ways in their perception of God as either an agent or cause of other existences. As an agent, God is understood as the highest supreme being, who holds power, will and knowledge to create contingencies. Whereas, if understanding God as the first cause, one must adhere to the argument on potentialities residing within substances. It can be observed that al-Ghazālī claimed God is the agent and possesses will. Although in *Iqtisād* al-Ghazālī mentioned that God is the cause of the existence of contingencies, what he meant by cause is not more than saying that God is the preponderant of every creation's existence. Maimonides clearly believed God is both the agent and the cause. He incorporated both elements, including the theory of causation, potential-actual and emanation, as well as the theory of particularization in his discourse on God and His relation with the universe and contingencies. This seems to be a result of his attempt to harmonize philosophy with religion.

Similarities between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides in the discussion above are only evident in their affirmation of God’s necessary existence. However, their underlying arguments on necessary existence differed. Maimonides’ dual categorization of necessary existence definitely distinguishes their arguments from there onwards. This entails the dual argument by which Maimonides affirmed God is the agent and cause of every occurrence. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī only affirmed God is the agent through His will and concept of particularization.

These findings suggest that al-Ghazālī’s argument is more precise and plausible in understanding God’s existence and His relation with the universe. Although Maimonides provided several similar arguments to al-Ghazālī, his attempt to harmonize philosophy with the Scriptures definitely caused greater complexity and perplexity in understanding God.

Meanwhile, from the discussion on anthropomorphism, two questions are deduced. First, how did al-Ghazālī and Maimonides prove God’s incorporeality? Second, how did al-Ghazālī and Maimonides interpret anthropomorphic verses? These questions were discussed in previous chapters and the findings are summarized in the following table.

Table 6.1.2: Anthropomorphism According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

NO	ISSUES	AL-GHAZĀLĪ	MAIMONIDES	ANALYSIS
1	Incorporeality of God	<p>God is free from substance, body and accidents</p> <p>Four possibilities of existence: a)substance b)body c)accidents d)incorporeal</p> <p>Occupying space: a) no composition = atom (<i>jawhar fard</i>) b) composite = body (<i>jism</i>)</p>	<p>God must be free from substance, accidents and motion</p> <p>Four possibilities of existence: a)corporeal, b)incorporeal, c)distributed force d)indivisible force</p>	<p>Both argued that God is incorporeal and must be detached from any form of substance.</p> <p>Nevertheless, their categorization stems from different argument. Al-Ghazālī argued from the premise “Everything except God is created.” On the other hand, Maimonides’</p>

		<p>Not occupying space: a) requires body = accident ('<i>arad</i>) b) does not require body = incorporeal God</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)</i></p>		<p>premise stems from the argument on motion which includes the theory of potential and actual.</p>
2	Interpreting anthropomorphic verses	<p><u>Literal interpretation</u> -Totally refuted as this leads to a figurative understanding of God</p> <p><u>Allegorical interpretation</u> -Only certain verses are qualified to be interpreted allegorically -Must go through the screening process of five existences: ontological, sensorial, conceptual, noetic & analogous. Only noetic and analogous existences can be interpreted -Excessive interpretation leads to deviation</p> <p><u>Consigning meaning to the verses on God</u> - Accepted the original form of verses and consigned meaning to God -Layman's approach -Seven steps in perceiving anthropomorphic verses</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Iljam al-'Awwam 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām)</i></p>	<p><u>Literal interpretation</u> -Totally refuted as this leads to a figurative understanding of God</p> <p><u>Allegorical interpretation</u> -All verses attributing figures to God must be interpreted including attributes and affections -Equivocation: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in vessels of silver" -Everything has double meaning -Without interpretation, one tends to liken God to humans</p> <p>-Did not explain this approach extensively -However, he accepted the layman's approach to maintain the verses and reject the literal meaning</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i> <i>(Mishneh Torah)</i></p>	<p><u>Literal interpretation</u> Both believed that a literal interpretation which leads to corporeality of God is unacceptable</p> <p><u>Allegorical interpretation</u> Al-Ghazālī advocated a justified interpretation compared to Maimonides' extreme allegory</p>

In addressing the first question, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides evidently renounced anthropomorphic verses on God's essence. This was to particularly accentuate the belief in God's incorporeality despite the existence of anthropomorphic verses in the Qur'an and the Bible. Both agreed that anthropomorphic verses must not lead to an understanding of a corporeal God. Thus, al-Ghazālī argued that God's essence must be detached from any space, substance, accident or direction. Similar to al-Ghazālī, Maimonides repudiated any form of change from being attributed to God.

Nevertheless, through the historical and textual analyses, this study found that Maimonides argued in the Aristotelian manner, which deduces that the first mover must not have been inflicted by any motion or change that relates to affections, emotions, matter or forms. Thus, God must be incorporeal. Although their arguments somewhat differ in the fundamental proposition of existence, they still acknowledged that God's incorporeality should be held as one of the most essential forms of divinity to be attributed to God.

Secondly, in the interpretation of anthropomorphic verses, there are two principal approaches commonly employed by both scholars in understanding such verses. One is the literal understanding of the verses and the other is allegorical interpretation. Al-Ghazālī nonetheless added one more level, which is the approach of consigning meaning to God.

The first approach was rejected by both scholars, which is adherence to literal meaning and which consequently leads one to understanding a corporeal God. Yet the Scriptures more often than not describe God in physical forms. Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides stated that these parables serve as a medium for humans to have a better understanding of the verses. They are embedded with corporeal elements, since humans perform the acts of hearing, seeing, walking, etc., with body parts.

In advocating the approach of allegorical interpretation, Maimonides appeared more enthusiastic than al-Ghazālī. Maimonides devoted an extensive deliberation in his *Guide* on explaining the equivocal meanings of verses, which he found as denoting figurative images of God. He referred to attributes of God that are included in the verses and that need to be interpreted allegorically.

Al-Ghazālī, on the other hand, was more thoughtful regarding interpretation. He only extended allegorical interpretation to verses that cannot be understood ontologically, sensorially and imaginatively. Only verses that have underlying meanings and require noetic and analogical perception must therefore be interpreted allegorically. Consequently, it is noted that al-Ghazālī seemed more conservative than Maimonides in the second approach.

Al-Ghazālī established another level of understanding anthropomorphic verses, which is to consign meaning to the verses on God. In addition, al-Ghazālī delineated seven stages in approaching the verses without having to employ allegorical interpretation. Al-Ghazālī considered that this approach certainly benefits the layman.

It cannot be denied that Maimonides also proposed a similar approach for the layman, as he acknowledged the limitations of the intellect in understanding God. However, he did not discuss it in detail and only emphasized allegorical interpretation. According to Maimonides, it suffices for ordinary persons to believe that a Being exists, which is perfect, incorporeal, and not inherent in a body, and who is sanctified from any deficiency. God must not be afflicted by any changes and non-existence, i.e. something that is potential at one time and real at another time. According to Maimonides, the layman should also possess a set of beliefs that there is no other God or any association with God besides the one God who may be worshipped.

Al-Ghazālī appeared more inclined towards this approach, especially in reference to the layman. In addition, it can be observed that he espoused a more

comprehensive guide for the layman to adopt this approach. Maimonides, in contrast, permitted the condition of affirming the incorporeality of God with no further deliberation or guideline, since he was more inclined toward explaining the equivocal meanings of verses, as noted in his *Guide*.

The similarity between the two scholars' argument is in their affirmation of God's incorporeality. Both held God's incorporeality to be one of the most important aspects in the concept of God. They also argued similarly on rejecting literal interpretation that leads to the notion of incorporeality. They did not, however, condemn those who accept the original form of verses without incorporating a figurative understanding of God.

Their differences are evident when al-Ghazālī asserted and elaborated another layer to the approach of interpreting anthropomorphic verses. Al-Ghazālī advocated the approach of consigning meaning to God and proposed steps to perceiving the verses for the layman. Meanwhile, Maimonides did not seem to explicitly explain this approach. Maimonides' writing concerned more the elaboration of allegorical interpretation, which reflects his philosophical inclination to understanding verses of the Scriptures.

To conclude, it can be perceived that in addressing anthropomorphic verses, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides acknowledged similar approaches but differed in their process and application. Al-Ghazālī seemed more conservative in interpreting verses allegorically, whereby he outlined specific guidelines for either understanding verses literally or allegorically. In contrast, Maimonides had a stronger fundamental stance on interpreting verses in his *Guide*, which is seen to incorporate philosophical interpretation with the Scriptures, and which is very apparent in his writings on allegorical interpretation.

6.2 Attributes and Names of God According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

The discourse on God's attributes encompasses three main questions. First, do attributes cause multiplicity to God's essence? Second, how do attributes act as a link between God and man? Third, can God's names be directly attributed to His essence? All these questions have been discussed and the analysis of the findings is summarized as follows.

Table 6.2: Attributes and Names of God According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

NO	ISSUES	AL-GHAZĀLĪ	MAIMONIDES	ANALYSIS
1	Position of attributes to God's Essence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meaning superadded to God's essence -Other than essence but subsists within essence -Eternal and non-accidental -God's attributes must be perceived equivocally <p>= God's perfect being constitutes His essence and attributes</p> <p><u>Negative attributes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eternity, immortality & oneness -Negated imperfections from God's essence by affirming these three attributes -Al-Ghazālī did not specifically term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attributes are accidents -Cannot be attributed to God except for the essential attributes which are perceived as God's actions -God's attributes must be perceived equivocally <p>= God's perfect being is simple, absolute and without attributes</p> <p><u>Negative attributes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negated all attributes from being predicated of God's essence except for the essential attributes, which are in reference to His actions and relation with man -Allowed describing 	<p>Al-Ghazālī advocated that God's attributes are not accidents, for God is not a substance and accidents can only be subscribed to substance.</p> <p>In contrary, Maimonides stated that attributes are similar to those of man, which are categorized as accidents and cannot be attributed to God.</p> <p>Their difference lies in the perception of attributes. Both perceived attributes as equivocation</p> <p><u>Negative attributes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Al-Ghazālī's concept of negative attributes is clearly different from Maimonides' -Al-Ghazālī affirmed God's uniqueness despite His perfect eternal attributes -Maimonides totally negated attributes due

		<p>these as negative attributes. Nevertheless, he did mention affirming these three attributes and negating their opposites as essential from God's essence -However, these attributes were further established after al-Ghazālī, which are categorized as negative attributes (<i>ṣifāt salbiyyah</i>)</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād) (Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)</i></p>	<p>God but in negation form, e.g. God is not unwise -Reiterated the negative theology from Philo, which was deduced from the scriptural reasoning of the unlikeness of God</p> <p><i>The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>to the incompetence of the human mind to utter the complete uniqueness of God -Silence and not articulating God are preferable -Thus, Maimonides' negative attributes somewhat proved a contradiction in acknowledging God, as the intellect connotes affirming attributes to Him.</p>
2	Essential attributes	<p>-Life, knowledge, power, will, speech, sight, hearing -Connote different concepts and purposes -They are compulsory attributes that must be predicated of God's essence -These attributes are attached to the objects of attributes without causing changes to God's essence</p> <p><u>Attributes of Actions</u></p> <p>-Actions are other attributes besides the essential attributes -Either eternal or contingent -Reflecting God's relation to His creations</p>	<p>-Life, knowledge, power and will are construed as one -There is no difference between attributes, as they refer to God's actions and not His essence -These attributes are manifestations of His relation to man, which are considered His actions and not attributes</p> <p><u>Attributes of Actions</u></p> <p>-Essential attributes are His actions -Reflecting God's relation to His creations</p>	<p>Al-Ghazālī refuted the philosophers who construed different attributes as one, for they imply different meanings and functions.</p> <p>On the other hand Maimonides' concept of the simple being of God transcends His essential attributes, which are considered His actions.</p> <p>Both regarded essential attributes as relations to created objects but through different methods: Al-Ghazālī through affirming and Maimonides by considering essential attributes as purely actions.</p>

		<p>-</p> <p>a) God (Knower)</p> <p>b) Attribute-potential (Knowledge)</p> <p>Action-actual</p> <p>c) Object (Known)</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i></p>	<p>-</p> <p>a) God- in potential (Knowledge)</p> <p>b) Action-in actual (Knower)</p> <p>c) Object (Known)</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>Al-Ghazālī considered attributes as being attached to objects, while Maimonides employed God's actions in linking God with created objects.</p> <p>Both are parallel in accepting attributes of actions as a connection between God and human activities.</p> <p>Nevertheless, their concepts of actions differ in terms of their actualization. Al-Ghazālī referred to attributes as the media between God and His actions. Meanwhile, Maimonides affirmed that God's potential knowledge is actualized through His essence as the intellectus.</p>
3	Names of God	<p>-Allah refers to God's essence</p> <p>-Other names reflect His attributes and actions</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i> <i>(Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharh Asma' Allah al-Husna)</i></p>	<p>-YHWH refers to God's essence</p> <p>-Other names are considered actions of God</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>Maimonides only demonstrated the relation between God and humans through the manifestation of His actions. He failed to demonstrate the oneness and eternity of God, where subscribing God with attributes would only cause God's plurality.</p> <p>Contrarily, al-Ghazālī proved God's unity and His relation to man through both His attributes and actions. Al-Ghazālī affirmed attributes as</p>

				something different from His essence. For if attributes were God's essence, this would further cause multiplicity to God.
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This study revealed that the question of whether attributes can be predicated of God's essence remains disputable among metaphysics scholars. Al-Ghazālī, an attributist, definitely argued that attributes can be predicated of God's essence while simultaneously affirming His unity. Al-Ghazālī had earlier asserted that God is neither a body that requires space or accident, nor is He a single substance, let alone an accident. On the other hand, Maimonides argued that attributes only lead to attaching accidents to God's essence, as attributes are related to time and space. Maimonides maintained that attributes should not be elements superadded to His essence nor are they solely His essence. Thus, Maimonides agreed that attributes can only be related to God's actions since they are indirectly related to His essence.

Thus, the findings infer that the difference between the two scholars' views is in their demonstration of God's attributes. Al-Ghazālī affirmed God's unity through the mind with the establishment of attributes, whereby meanings serve as a layer between God and His creations. Attributes hence act as agents of producing God's actions. They subsist in God's essence but are not His essence and are eternal. Therefore, God knows with His knowledge, not His essence. If God knew with His essence, as claimed by Maimonides and some philosophers, contingencies would therefore affect His eternal essence.

Besides, from the textual analysis it can be observed that Maimonides claimed God possesses a perfect essence. He disproved theologians including al-Ghazālī who only appeared reliant on mental activity for demonstration. Maimonides claimed it is merely imagination, and otherwise attempted to prove God's attributes through

physical demonstration, which leads to God's negation if God's attributes are likened to man's attributes. This is likewise in demonstrating God's act of creation, where theologians basically adopted the creation of atoms while philosophers including Maimonides agreed with the theory of motion, with God being the first mover.

Therefore, the position of God's attributes according to Maimonides must be totally negated from God, as God must only be understood homonymously in order to nullify His corporeality. On the other hand, perhaps al-Ghazālī's understanding of the essential role of the layer of attributes in safeguarding God's eternal being, although seemingly more complex, serves as a more holistic approach and is more comprehensible for man to understand God's attributes. Maimonides' negative theory of attributes clearly leads to a non-affirmative approach to understanding God, contradicting Maimonides' own argument on his theory of the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible.

The second issue in the discussion on God's attributes in relation to man, the essential attributes of God, was extensively elaborated by al-Ghazālī and Maimonides. The main divergence in their argument regards the number of essential attributes. To al-Ghazālī, there are seven essential attributes, namely power, knowledge, life, will, hearing, sight and speech. Meanwhile, Maimonides affirmed only four essential attributes that God must possess, namely life, power, wisdom and will. The second divergence is their position with respect to attributes pertaining to essence. As mentioned above, Al-Ghazālī affirmed these attributes are superadded, eternal and subsisting in God's essence. Thus, God acts with His power, knows with His knowledge, lives with the attribute of life, wills with the attribute of will and so on. On the other hand, Maimonides disagreed with the argument that was in line with al-Ghazālī's claim that God acts with His essence, knows with His essence, and wills with His essence, and His essence itself shows that He is alive.

Conversely, from the textual analysis, this study found that al-Ghazālī demarcated the philosophers' (including Maimonides) failure to distinguish between God's attributes and essence leads to problems in understanding the relation between God and man. Maimonides, however, emphasized there is no problem in comprehending these attributes as actions rather than reflecting these attributes to His essence, as God's actions will not affect His eternal essence, whereas adopting attributes would certainly affect His simple essence. Besides, al-Ghazālī also highlighted that the misconception of attributes and essence leads to lexical errors in not being able to differentiate between 'the knower' and 'existence' for instance. How do 'knowing' and 'existing' share similar connotations? According to Maimonides, God being able to comprehend demonstrates His existence directly. Al-Ghazālī retorted that the terms 'knowing' and 'existing' cannot be applied interchangeably to God at once. It is true that if God knows it means He is alive. But the two terms denote different concepts and must be differentiated. Failure to differentiate between attributes and essence ultimately leads to the causational theory, which al-Ghazālī strongly rejected.

This is obvious in Maimonides' understanding of God in relation to man. By affirming actions per se to God in viewing His relation to His creations, Maimonides alternatively had to accept the emanative theory, which shows that causation is part of what makes an understanding of God's relation to man. This is achieved by understanding God as the efficient cause of every occurrence through the process of actualization from potential states, with God acting as the First Mover.

This study also highlighted al-Ghazālī's claim that every occurrence is the object of God's power. According to al-Ghazālī, God creates every single substance and no occurrence can be produced without God's permission. Thus, it can be observed here that al-Ghazālī demonstrated the direct relation between God and

created objects, while Maimonides established necessary causation as part of God's actions that emanate from God's essence to produce occurrences.

Hence, the implication of essential attributes with God, which Maimonides negated because it leads to the composition of God's essence, actually causes a much more serious implication in God's relation with man. Although it can also be seen as actions of God, the missing eternal layer of attributes nonetheless clearly leads to a causal theory in reference to God and His creations. Note that al-Ghazālī strongly emphasized the absurdity of necessary causation being associated with God, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Third, on the discussion of names, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides believed that only the terms Allah and YHWH may refer to God's essence directly in Islam and Judaism respectively. Only these terms describe God as a whole and not partially. Nevertheless, they somewhat differed in reference to understanding the essence of God, where al-Ghazālī clearly emphasized that essence together with superadded eternal attributes subsists in His essence. In contrary, Maimonides strictly highlighted a simple essence of God, which negates seeing attributes as part of His essence.

As for other names, al-Ghazālī accepted that derivative attributes and actions may be part of God's names. Nevertheless, Maimonides only accepted names declared by the Prophets, which must be understood homonymously in sanctifying God from any corporeal interpretation.

In general, from the comparative analysis these findings suggest that both diverging and converging points occurred in al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discussions. Al-Ghazālī opened his discourse on attributes with negations and by purifying God's essence from contingencies; for instance, he denied that God is temporal and mortal, and negated that God's essence may be related to corporeality, accidents and position. Next, he elaborated that essential attributes are superadded (*zai'dah*) and subsisting

(*qai'man*) in His essence but are not His essence. He concluded that God's names are part of His attributes and actions.

Maimonides initially repudiated attributes, which he believed are accidents, making it thus impossible to predicate attributes of God. He then explicated there are four essential attributes that are similar to one another as well as to God's essence. Besides, Maimonides regarded them as attributes of actions reflecting God's relation to His creations. He also considered God's names as His perfect actions. Maimonides further negated any attributes beyond the four essential ones mentioned. He concluded with the need to prioritize silence in predicating God.

It is quite obvious there is no similarity between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' conceptions of attributes. Although both accepted essential attributes, their conceptions of attributes totally differ. Al-Ghazālī did not regard God's attributes as accidents, while Maimonides from the beginning affirmed that attributes are accidents that cannot be associated with God. Maimonides stated that essential attributes can only be regarded as actions of God and cannot reflect His essence. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī believed that essential attributes subsist in God's essence. Thus, their differences are apparent, as both adopted varying lines of argument: al-Ghazālī employed the theological stance on God and attributes, while al-Ghazālī argued philosophically that God possesses a simple being.

6.3 Actions of God According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

In comprehending God's actions, there are three main questions. First, why does God permit the occurrence of evil when He is capable of deterring its existence? If God is claimed to be good and just, how can one claim that God created evil, or does evil occur through another agent? Second, is it necessary for God to reward good deeds and

punish bad deeds? Third, does God determine every occurrence and does man have no will and power over his own actions? And do man's actions occur according to God's foreknowledge or God's knowledge consequent to man's actions? The questions above have been discussed in previous chapters and the findings are summarized in the following table.

Table 6.3: Actions of God According to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides

NO	ISSUES	AL-GHAZĀLĪ	MAIMONIDES	ANALYSIS
1	The concept of evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -God creates every occurrence -Good and bad are of the same quality to God -One cannot necessitate the quality of things unto God <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> God does not create evil directly, instead He creates it indirectly -Man directly creates evil, as only corporeal matter causes evil -Evil requires a direct agent, i.e. man <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>The main factor in the divergence between al-Ghazālī and Maimonides lies in the subscription of purposes to God. Al-Ghazālī claimed man cannot assume what God must and must not do. God's will is totally free from any purpose. Meanwhile, Maimonides' failure to relate negative conjunctions to God leads to failure in judging God's free will</p>
2	Reward and punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No obligations should be associated with God -God is not obligated to reward saints and punish transgressors -God can befall misfortune onto good people -Man's intellect is not capable of determining God's acts, especially in His decisions to reward or punish <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussed twofold: (i) Divine Providence and (ii) Mosaic Law -(i) God's providence extends to people with high moral and intellectual perfection, concurrent with the theory of emanation -Providence is only extended towards intellectual beings -(ii) Consigning God's acts to His will and volition <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(The Guide of the</i></p>	<p>In God's actions, al-Ghazālī basically rejected any notion of necessities from God. This can be seen in the theory of rewards for good and evil-doers.</p> <p>Unlike al-Ghazālī, Maimonides used the emanation theory to indirectly necessitate God's actions. For instance, good doers will be rewarded with good rewards.</p> <p>It is clear that Maimonides believed</p>

			<i>Perplexed)</i>	<p>there is a limit to God's will, which indirectly causes limitations to His power. This is certainly a result of the emanation theory.</p> <p>They differ in terms of Providence. Al-Ghazālī refuted the theory of Providence, as it is related to the notion of causality, which necessitate God. For instance, evil things are not allowed to occur to good people. Whereas in al-Ghazālī's idea of God as the <i>fa'il mukhtar</i>, nothing is necessary of God to the extent of rewarding good people for their good deeds</p>
3	<p>God's will, power and knowledge</p>	<p><u>Will & Power</u> -God creates everything out of His eternal will and power</p> <p>-God's will is purposeless but His action is not -His will does not necessarily follow human purpose -At the same time, God's actions are not useless -God is the Agent with will</p> <p>-Human's will and power are created -However, humans possess responsibility</p>	<p><u>Will & Power</u> -Everything is created out of God's will and power and through necessary causation</p> <p>-God's actions / His will are not purposeless -God's will is always intended for a good purpose, i.e. human perfection</p> <p>-Human will and power are created -However, humans possess the ability to</p>	<p><u>Al-Ghazālī</u> -Incorporated God's will and power as the direct cause of producing contingencies. Everything that occurs within God's will and power must be the object of His knowledge.</p> <p><u>Maimonides</u> -Affirmed that God's actions are demonstrated through His knowledge, where His essence and knowledge are considered as one. Everything that happens is within God's corpus of knowledge. Will and</p>

		<p><i>(taklif)</i> -Humans possess inquisition (<i>kasb</i>)</p> <p><u>Knowledge</u> -Includes particulars & universals -Infinite & unchangeable -God's foreknowledge does not necessarily entail the determinist approach</p> <p><i>(Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād)</i></p>	<p>attain intellectual perfection</p> <p><u>Knowledge</u> -Includes particulars & universals -Infinite & unchangeable</p> <p><i>(The Guide of the Perplexed)</i></p>	<p>power are demonstrated as part of His relation with creations. His actions can basically be seen through His will and power in addition to the causal contingencies that occur through the concept of the actualization of potentialities.</p>
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In addressing the first issue that was discussed in the previous chapter, this study infers that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides had different ideas on the concept of evil. Maimonides iterated that God must not be associated with evil, whereas al-Ghazālī adduced that God creates both good and evil. It can be observed that differences in their views emerged from their conceptualization of evil. Al-Ghazālī defined evil as something that if not fulfilled will harm the person in the hereafter. Here, it is noted that al-Ghazālī adopted revelation as the scale for differentiating between good and evil without denying the intellect as a tool in perceiving them. On the other hand, Maimonides reiterated Aristotle in defining evil and proposed that evil is a privation of something that can only be related directly to material beings. Thus, God acts only as an indirect agent of evil through creating humans and does not cause evil directly. This answers the second question of the first topic.

To Maimonides, it is not only for God to inflict misfortunes onto good people. If torment befalls someone, it is a result of their deeds. Whereas, al-Ghazālī agreed that bad things may befall good doers, as God should never judge what is good and bad. Thus, as a human and slave of God, God has the right to do whatever He wills upon

His slave. Man has to believe that God is just and all His acts are just according to His wisdom. God is simply off the human scale.

This study revealed that regarding the concept of reward and punishment, al-Ghazālī appeared once again to emphasize the correct form of perceiving God's actions, which is not to obligate God with an act that is merely determined by the human intellect. Thus, al-Ghazālī argued that it is not part of God's obligation to reward and punish or even to inflict suffering to saints, and it should not be questioned by man. In other words, al-Ghazālī was trying to instil that man is not in the position to question God's acts.

Maimonides, on the other hand, discussed the concept of rewards by explaining the Divine Providence, which is supported by the Mosaic Law. Maimonides believed that God's providence can be achieved through intellectual perfection. Thus, God's providence and rewards will only endow those who act and behave accordingly. It can be seen here that in other words, Maimonides' approach seems to necessitate God's act in offering rewards and punishments. However, in addressing the account of Job who was morally good but suffered misfortunes, Maimonides opted for the Mosaic solution, which is to consign God's act to His will and volition. Maimonides acknowledged man's intellectual limitation in not being able to fully understand God's act. Here, Maimonides' double opinion was perhaps a result of his attempt to synthesize philosophical thought with revelation. Thus, it is observed that al-Ghazālī's proposal to correct man's perception of God's acts is perhaps more plausible to man's capability and limitation instead of pondering what God should and should not do, especially on the subject of reward and punishment.

In addressing the third question, the study demonstrated that al-Ghazālī and Maimonides undertook the compatibilist approach. Both believed that God and man possess power and will, except that God's power and will are superior to those of man.

According to al-Ghazālī, man has the power to put effort in his actions, while Maimonides believed that man must strive to attain intellectual perfection, which is closely related to God's providence. Hence, there is no need to debate on how man's will and power are futile vis-a-vis God's power and will.

Nevertheless, looking into Maimonides' proposition of providence concurrent with God's will, the study demonstrated a discrepancy within his argument. If God is free to will anything He wants, how can His actions succumb to the rule of providence, which was initiated by man's logical interpretation? Subsequently, God's free will is not an absolute free will. However, it can only be claimed to be relatively free. This is different from al-Ghazālī's approach. He proposed an absolute free will, whereby God is considered the Particularizing Agent who is free to act upon His will, and God's will and power do not succumb to anything.

With regards to the final issue concerning God's foreknowledge on human choice, the study signified that both scholars affirmed the key character of God's knowledge, which is consistent with His will and actions. Everything that happens according to God's will and power must be within the object of His knowledge. Therefore, every event takes place with God's knowledge. Both scholars agreed that God's divine knowledge encompasses past, present and future events, including universals and particulars. God's knowledge is not derived from the object of His knowledge. However, the object of His knowledge occurs according to His knowledge. It can be observed that in the discussion on God's knowledge both scholars appeared to present the determinist approach. God's knowledge remains supreme and is not affected by the underlying plurality of the world. What distinguishes al-Ghazālī from Maimonides is the perspective on the position of God's knowledge, will and power. Maimonides reiterated the philosophers' stance on a simple being of God whose essence consists of elements, such as knowledge, power,

will and life. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī affirmed that knowledge, power and will are God's superadded attributes that differ from His essence.

The findings suggest two essential points that can be deduced from the discourse on God's actions. First, one either adopts revelation above reason or vice versa in determining God's actions. Second is being a determinist or indeterminist. Evidently, al-Ghazālī emphasized affirming God's actions through His will, power and knowledge, which cannot be determined by the human mind. This includes referring to any occurrence, be it good or bad, as being part of God's creation. Al-Ghazālī prohibited necessitating God according to what man thinks is right. Thus, man should not dictate what God should and should not do.

On the other hand, Maimonides employed reason to determine God's actions. In contrast to al-Ghazālī, Maimonides dictated what God should and should not do. For instance, God should not give bad fates to good doers and God should be directly associated with evil. Accordingly, Maimonides adopted the Aristotelian theory of privation in defining evil. Evil is the privation of a thing and can only be related to man, as God is an immaterial being that cannot be associated with evil. In addition, Maimonides' theory of providence appears to necessitate God to reward those with high intellectual perfection. Thus, God's will and power must be concurrent with man's logical reason.

Here, al-Ghazālī is seen to employ the determinist approach as well as Maimonides through the notion of will. Nevertheless, both scholars emphasized the indeterminist approach, where al-Ghazālī for instance highlighted man's effort while Maimonides stressed intellectual perfection in order to achieve God's providence. Yet their approaches may not be truly seen as indeterminist due to their allocation of God's supreme power and will over those of man. They attempted to reach a compatibilist

approach through integrating both God's elements and man's actions within an occurrence.

Obviously, al-Ghazālī and Maimonides similarly argued on God's will and power in reflecting God's actions, even if Maimonides opted for the Mosaic teaching. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī completely refuted Maimonides' theory of providence due to its necessitation of God's knowledge and actions. To al-Ghazālī, it is simply beyond man's intellect to deem what is in God's knowledge. The major difference is thus in the notion of necessitating God's actions.

Overall, this study established that the main divergence between the two scholars is in their sources of argumentation. Al-Ghazālī relied upon the Law in perceiving God's acts, whereas Maimonides attempted to synthesize both philosophical arguments and the Mosaic tradition in demonstrating God's acts. Al-Ghazālī fully acknowledged man's incompetence in understanding God's acts, thus regarding God as the true agent behind every occurrence, who acts according to His will and wisdom. Meanwhile, Maimonides adhered to the Neoplatonist and Aristotelian arguments, which defined his concepts of evil and providence. Nevertheless, Maimonides also adhered to the Mosaic teaching on volition. Maimonides' arguments may seem comprehensive, although at some points there is contradiction. To conclude, it can be claimed that perhaps al-Ghazālī's arguments seem more coherent and plausible to man's limited intellect in understanding God's actions.

6.4 Conclusion

This study set out with the aim of assessing the similarities and differences in al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on the concept of God. As far as this study is

concerned, both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, despite having originated from different religious backgrounds, discussed the concept of God in a similar structure from the aspects of God's existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names as well as actions.

In establishing the argument on God's existence, apparently al-Ghazālī completely upheld that God's will and power transcend any occurrence. This is noted from the beginning of his argument on God's existence, where he only affirmed two forms of existence and denied dualism in understanding necessary existence as Maimonides affirmed. Al-Ghazālī's affirmation of God's power to create the universe out of nothing also proves that he truly affirmed God's agency in every occurrence, which is evident in al-Ghazālī's argument on God as the Particularizing Agent.

In contrary, Maimonides presented a dual concept in describing God's relation to His creations: the agent and the cause. This is a result of Maimonides' categorization of dual necessary existence. Maimonides clearly highlighted the concept of potential and actual in every occurrence, which does not particularly hold God's will as the supreme cause of occurrence as al-Ghazālī believed. Maimonides perhaps accepted cause and effect as being in the same position as God's will in His relation with occurrences.

In the discussion on anthropomorphism, al-Ghazālī's argument is more concise in understanding the layman approach, which does not require allegorical interpretation. Although he accepted allegorical interpretation, al-Ghazālī highlighted guidelines for rectifying verses that can be interpreted. It can be seen that al-Ghazālī's approach on anthropomorphism is clear and precise, especially in offering a comprehensive guide to understanding anthropomorphic verses.

Maimonides, on the other hand, believed that every verse in the Scriptures possesses underlying meanings that humans must interpret. This idea is apparent in his perception of philosophy adjacent to the Scriptures. Maimonides' belief there is a

double sense in the verses resulted in him interpreting almost every verse denoting figures, emotions or actions that seem similar to man.

Whereas in the discussion on God's attributes, al-Ghazālī negated God's attributes as being accidents, since accidents are absolutely impossible for God, while attributes are eternal to God. Al-Ghazālī stated that God's essential attributes are other than His essence, subsist in His essence and are eternal. These attributes act as a layer that transcends God's relation to man. Thus, God knows with His attribute of knowledge and likewise with His other attributes. According to al-Ghazālī, the failure of the philosophers to distinguish between essence and language may lead to understanding contingency of God's essence.

Maimonides contrarily affirmed that attributes are accidents and thus lead to God's plurality when ascribing attributes to God. Alternatively, Maimonides' proposal of negative attributes in perceiving God somehow leads to contradictions in his argument. Another alternative that Maimonides undertook was to categorize them as attributes of actions. The attributes thus refer to God's actions rather than His essence.

In the debate on God's actions, al-Ghazālī obviously highlighted his main thesis in his denial of obligating God's actions to man's purpose or benefit. The human mind must not attach any necessary actions to God. This is apparent in al-Ghazālī's categorization of the quality of essence and actions. Quality of essence is what is determined by the Law as good and bad. Whereas to deem God's actions as good or bad is simply beyond man's capability. Apart from that, God's will, power and foreknowledge should not hinder man from achieving his best through the intellectual and physical acquisition with which he is endowed.

Maimonides, on the other hand, demonstrated God's actions twofold: i) Providence of God and ii) the Mosaic teaching. In the theory of providence, Maimonides highlighted that God certainly provides good fates to the saints and

punishes the transgressors. However, he also adopted the Mosaic teaching regarding the account of Job, where he consigned the human fate to God, be it good or bad. This is obvious in his line of argument to synthesize philosophical arguments with the Law. Besides, Maimonides also held a compatibilist approach in affirming that God's will, power and knowledge do not deny man's capability in attaining intellectual perfection.

From the above discussion on existence, attributes and actions, it can be construed that they lead to understanding of God's unity, incorporeality and relation of God with His creations. The study found that al-Ghazālī's understanding of God's unity is observed in his denial of the dualistic approach to God's necessary existence, whereas Maimonides affirmed dual forms of necessary existence, referring to God and eternal matter. Besides, in the discourse on attributes, al-Ghazālī highlighted God's unity by affirming attributes of God while Maimonides detached God from any attributes in affirming His unity. Although al-Ghazālī's argument on attributes may perhaps seem to be more complex in understanding God's unity, al-Ghazālī seems much more attentive in elaborating the concept, where he explained that God's attributes are not accidents as God Himself is not composed of substance or body like man is, which requires accidents. Thus, it is unacceptable to say that God's attributes are accidents as Maimonides argued.

Maimonides' thought on unity, however, clearly resembles the philosophical argument of God's simple and absolute being in affirming His unity. Maimonides argued that attributes are accidents that cannot be subscribed to God. Maimonides' argument on unity perhaps employs a straightforward form of understanding God's unity. Nevertheless, the implication of his rejection of attributes results in a more complex argument through his proposition of negative attributes.

The two scholars' difference is obvious in their varying ascriptions to sources. Maimonides adopted the philosophical line of argument, whereas Al-Ghazālī completely rejected the philosophical stance of dualism.

Apart from unity, the concept of God also entails demonstrating God's incorporeality, and the discussion on anthropomorphism directly addresses the notion of God's incorporeality. Both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides argued incorporeality so as to free God from figurative forms, such as substance, body, accidents and forms. Nevertheless, their categorization of existence somewhat differed. Al-Ghazālī categorized existence in line with the theological form of argument, while Maimonides argued in parallel with the theory of potential and actual.

Meanwhile, in comprehending God's relation with man, it can be seen that al-Ghazālī believed that God's will transcends every occurrence. Maimonides conversely believed that God's relation with man can be perceived twofold: first, God's will and particularization in the arbitrariness of the sphere; second, God as the First Cause emanates through the necessary causation in every occurrence. Accordingly, Maimonides held that God is the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. Maimonides' apprehension seems to affirm God's relation with His creations through the emanative and causative perspectives. Al-Ghazālī, however, strongly emphasized God's will in apprehending God's relation with His creations.

Al-Ghazālī's argument on attributes also proves the relation between God and His creations. Al-Ghazālī substantiated that God's essential attributes have an important role in carrying out God's actions. Al-Ghazālī delineated the concept of attaching these attributes to contingencies that can be seen as safeguarding the eternity of God's essence. This layer of attributes is thus essential to perceiving the relation between God and constant occurrences. Therefore, al-Ghazālī emphasized that God's

will and particularization transcend every occurrence. He also totally relied upon God's omnipotence in perceiving the direct relationship of God with His creations

Maimonides debated God's relation with the creations differently. He accepted essential attributes to demonstrate God's relation with His creations. Maimonides nevertheless emphasized the concept of emanation as well by affirming God is the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible. It is apparent that his theory of emanation originates from the theory of potential and actual. Thus, it is clear that Maimonides' affirmation of essential attributes is argumentative at the surface per se. The underlying process of occurrence, however, takes place through the emanative process. Evidently here Maimonides not only affirmed that God is the agent, as al-Ghazālī highlighted, but he argued as well that God is the cause, as seen in his argument on the emanative concept.

In addition, it is also observed that God's actions directly illuminate God's relation with His creations in terms of contingencies as well as providing rewards and punishments to man. Apparently al-Ghazālī presented will and power in perceiving God's actions. Man's intellect, according to al-Ghazālī, is not capable of deeming what God should and should not do. God's actions are totally based on His will, power and knowledge. Maimonides also affirmed God's will but argued that God offers providence only to those who attempt to achieve intellectual perfection. Here, Maimonides highlighted God's wisdom in determining His actions. Thus, when attempting to determine God's knowledge, it may result in obligating God's actions.

This study concludes with examining al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' discourses on God and summing that both affirmed God's unity and incorporeality in their discussions on God's existence, anthropomorphism, attributes, names as well as actions. Their similarities in arguments are evident as Maimonides debated from the perspective of the Mosaic Law, such as his argument on creation, will and attributes.

Nevertheless, their underlying arguments obviously consist of multiple divergences, which are due to their varying orientations from the theological and philosophical stances. This is particularly obvious regarding the concept of will and particularization, which was mentioned by Davidson in his study that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides' argument possess similarity. Nevertheless, the current study demonstrated incoherence in their lines of argument, although Maimonides' arguments were similar to al-Ghazālī at the surface. However, Maimonides' underlying case was found to be more coherent with that of Ibn Rushd.

In general, it can be concluded that al-Ghazālī perceived God as the Agent of Will and the Particularizer, while Maimonides' concept God was more consistent with the concept of God as the Intellect, Intelligen and Intelligible.

This conclusion signifies the achievement of this study, which was to examine the concept of God according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides through the discussion of existence, attributes and actions. This study also analyzed the similarities and difference between both scholars' arguments. It advanced the comparative theology between Islam and Judaism on the concept of God, which involves eminent scholars in both religions, such as al-Ghazālī and Maimonides.

Although this study may not advocate a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic and Jewish concept of monotheism, the findings highlight the presence of similarities and affiliation between Islam and Judaism and particularly between Muslim and Jewish scholars in the discourse on the concept of God. Taken together, this study may serve as a platform for establishing interfaith dialogue between Islam and Judaism.

6.5 Recommendations

Returning to the purpose of the current study from the perspective of an interfaith dialogue, this study can be extended through future comparative research between Islam and Judaism. Future study can explore further into Maimonides and Ibn Rushd's cosmological arguments that consist of similarities, whereby both maintained a dualistic form of necessary existence and a created universe from eternal matter. Besides, their association is also evident with respect to the concept of providence.

Another Jewish scholar who seemed to hold a similar theological stance to al-Ghazālī was Judah Halevi. Perhaps future studies may provide comparative research on these two scholars to gain deeper understanding on the theological arguments of Jewish scholarship.

Besides, a comparative study of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides can be extended to discuss their arguments on prophecy. It is known that both Islam and Judaism hold a monotheistic belief. However, these two religions view prophecy differently. Thus, studying prophecy according to al-Ghazālī and Maimonides may demonstrate similarities, which can establish bridges in building dialogue between the two religions.

Lastly, the Institute of Higher Education in Malaysia may organize more interfaith discussions among students and scholars especially on the concept of God in Judaism which is rarely discussed openly to gain a much more objective understanding towards other religion

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